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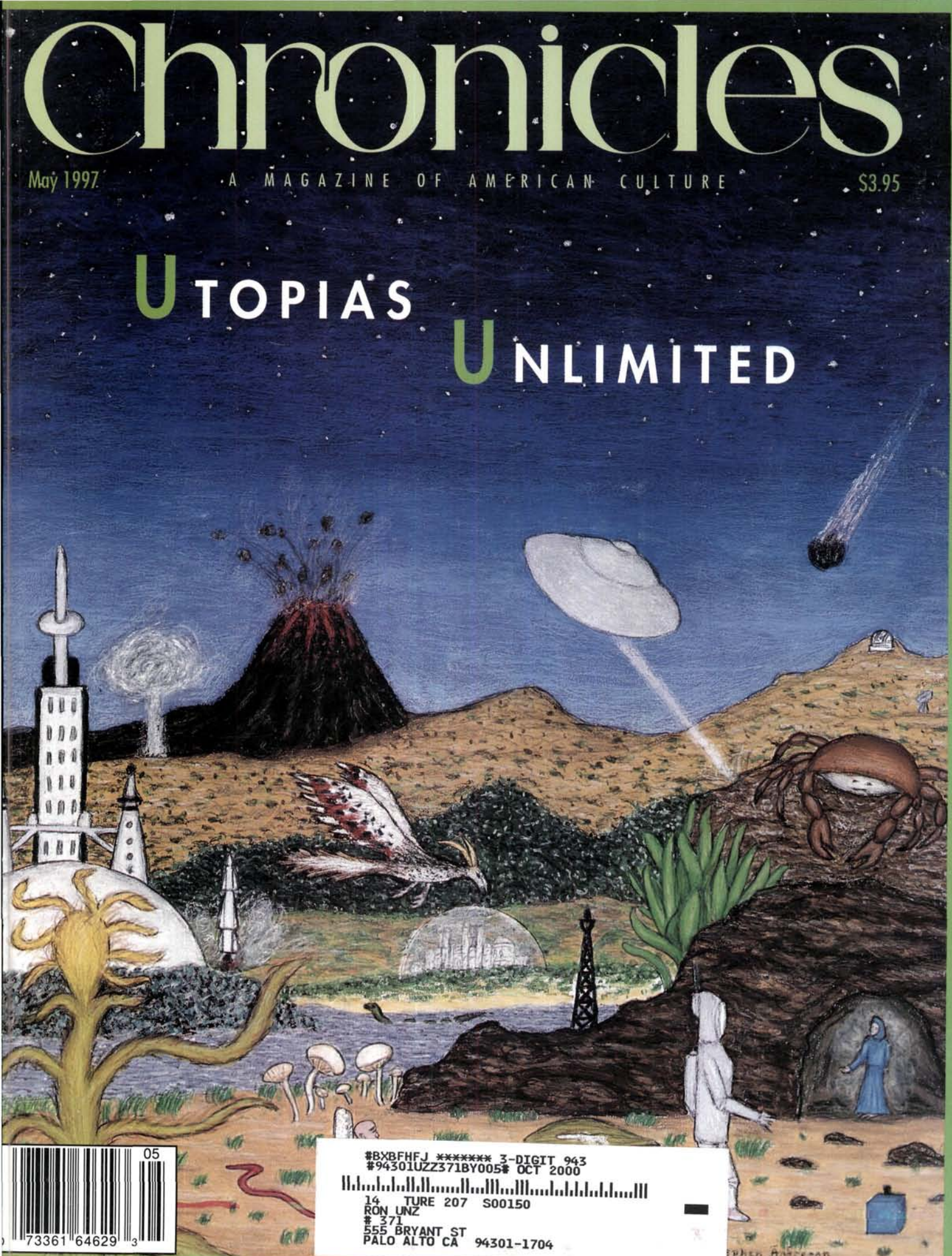

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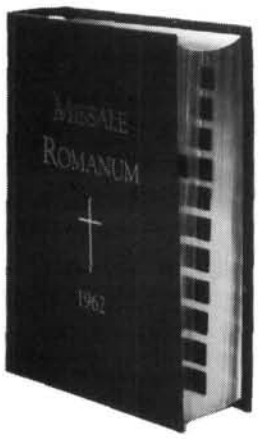

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Chronicles

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Franklin Sanders

The commitment to principle of coin and precious metals dealer Franklin Sanders ("The Most Dangerous Man in the Mid-South," February) is well known to his customers and fellow coin dealers. He is even better known to the "freedom movement" through his newsletter *The Moneychanger*.

Sanders reveals his true priority when he says, "In 1980, I opened my own business in West Memphis . . . selling physical gold and silver. The *first thing* I did was to write the Arkansas Attorney General to explain that I thought exchanges of gold and silver money for paper money were not subject to the sales tax, since they were exchanges of money for money." (Italics added.) To anybody launching a coin and precious metals business, an issue like the constitutional definition of money would ordinarily be set aside to more immediate concerns like financing, establishing identity, seeking a customer base and market niche. This would seem essential in starting any new enterprise.

Not for Sanders. His precious metals business would be the vehicle for a crusade which would inevitably lead to jail. Sanders says, "I did not sally forth looking for dragons to slay. The dragon came to me." In his sad odyssey, Sanders threw enough rocks and pebbles at these dragons to encourage them to crush him, and because of this it is difficult to read his chronicle without being sickened and outraged by the evil arrogance of the warfare-welfare state. The corpses are all around us, and courageous people like Franklin Sanders are early victims.

He's wrong in his judgment, however, that we must all follow his path. "Either you oppose a lie, or you become a liar. You can kid yourself and say you are only going along because they have all the guns, but day by day, year by year, your integrity erodes. Finally, you become like the tyrants: just one more liar."

Every true patriot, whether he be businessman, magazine editor or publisher, journalist or academic, walks the line between maintaining integrity and "staying in business." One day each of us may be forced to draw his line in the sand, but meanwhile we struggle as best we can to live and promote the principles of freedom, while retaining family and career.

We need the Franklin Sanderses of the world. These heroes may one day be celebrated in Freedom's Hall of Fame. If there ever is such a place, Franklin Sanders will have a prominent plaque in the money pavilion.

I am sending another check today to the Franklin Sanders Defense Fund.

—Burton S. Blumert
Coin and precious metals dealer
President, Center for Libertarian Studies
Burlingame, CA

On Anti-Orthodoxy

James Jatras has attempted to define the nature and cause of anti-Orthodox sentiment among opinion-makers in the West in his February article "Pravoslavophobia." There is certainly a degree of prejudice in the mundane sense of a bias based on ignorance, and this is compounded by the tendency of journalists and politicians to frame the complexities of life in a story line with simplistic good and evil subjects.

But I would not be so easy on folks. While they might be ignorant of the specific history and teachings of Orthodox Christians in foreign cultures, they don't really need to have more knowledge. They are acting out of an intuition that tells them all they need to know. In other words, they don't have to study Orthodoxy to understand that it is *the* enemy.

Why is this? It is because the very existence of something we might call Orthodoxy is not supposed to be. Humanity should have evolved beyond that point by now. The whole "modern" experiment, as it were, is a revolutionary revolt against monarchy and traditional institutions that used to represent Divine Rule in man's mundane affairs. The whole purpose of the American experiment is to reject the old, sinful world, based on a doctrine of obedience to King and Church, and to replace it with a new world and a new man that is in charge of his own destiny and capable, one day, of eliminating sin, where the whole idea of culture is devoid of meaning.

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While there has always been a healthy dose of skepticism toward such gnosticism by Americans of common sense, and by Protestants of the more Calvinistic variety, those times are gone. There is much less common sense these days, and most of the Calvinists have forgotten that sin ever existed. So we have less restraint than ever against the deformed souls of what some refer to as the "knowledge class." They know there is a problem within themselves so they can't stand to have cultures and societies exist which define their cultural destinies in spiritual terms. Not that all Orthodox are perfectly spiritual. It's what Orthodoxy *symbolizes* that is the threat—something mystical that is beyond the grasp of the libidinous power-mongers who pass themselves off as enlightened. In the East, religious people are seen as crazy. They still live in the woods and eat bark in places like Mount Áthos and in the forests of Russia. The leaders of those countries take counsel from "holy fools." You can't control people like that, and you can't reason with them. Better to wipe them out, or at the very least, keep them at bay by supplying your proxies with arms and propaganda. Don't believe for one minute that our leaders care about the Croats. They are uniting against a common enemy, and it's the truth.

—Owen Jones
President, Rose Hill College
Aiken, SC

I have read with interest James Jatras's article "Pravoslavophobia." Very rarely do we have the opportunity to read or hear the view of the "significant other" of the European, or Christian world.

One of the historical events that set Western Christianity against Eastern Christendom was the Fourth Crusade. As the West likes to argue, if we sacked and destroyed, it was not because we were aggressive, destructive, conniving, and devious, but because the "other" had it coming. Philosophically, the West can get away with this specious argument, for if history is considered a part of divine occurrence, it is the "Higher power" that is in charge.

For the Orthodox, history is man-made; it has nothing to do with God. Knowledge is a human, biological viewing of reality (of our existence here on earth). The subject of knowledge is man, his existence and experience in this world. *Recognition of the divine is not* obtained through scientific knowledge. Comprehension of the divine is attained through our spiritual side. This is why the Orthodox are not antagonistic to science. We accept it as knowledge of the world, but it is not proof of God's existence or His nonexistence. Only Western thought could culminate in Hegel's proclamation that "God is dead." For the Orthodox it was not a novelty, for we never looked for Him on earth.

These two philosophical strains stem from antiquity, from Aristotle, in the case of Western thought, and Plato, in the case of Eastern thought. Orthodoxy has its roots in the Platonic ideas of the Academy, and they flourished for a thousand years in the Byzantine world. Today, we hardly acknowledge it.

Europe has been destroying and persecuting two civilizations, while favoring and accepting the third. The Jewish and Orthodox civilizations are consistently being ostracized, while Europe is being Islamized. It is a paradox of our times, that we find the European civilization cutting its own limb off and replacing it with a foreign one. Without its Eastern limb, Europe will not be able to walk or run, nor will Europe's descendants.

Western civilization has many things to be proud of, but let us not forget that it also gave birth to the Crusades, the conquests of the Americas, and the destruction of many native peoples and cultures. At home, it brought the Inquisition, the religious wars, only to declare God dead in the end. Atheism, communism, and fascism are all Western creations, and unsolicited exports.

They seem to be successful exports, because they fell upon ground that had lost its connection with the past, through wars, invasions, and constant turmoil. Still, the Byzantine thought and the Orthodox faith exist. It would be worthwhile to rediscover them, so that our civilization could be whole again.

—Dusica Savic Benghiat
Pacific Palisades, CA

On Judicial Tyranny

Reading Thomas Fleming's article ("Here Come the Judge," February) on the federal takeover of schools in Rockford, Illinois, I was reminded of what the French have long said: "The more things change, the more they remain the same."

I lived in Lake County, Indiana, for the first 30 years of my life. The largest city in Lake County is Gary, and when I was growing up in the area in the 1940's and 50's it was widely known that Gary had the largest black population per capita of any city in the world outside of Africa. Gary is now considered the most segregated city in the United States. So, what's new? Gary was the most segregated city in the United States 40 years ago. Its population has slipped from 180,000 to around 120,000. It seems that the only rats that haven't jumped ship are the ones that can't get to the rail.

I moved to Stockton, California, in the late 60's. In 1976 a Mexican judge issued an order requiring forced bussing in the Stockton Unified School District (SUSD). At the time of the order, the racial mix of the SUSD was 60 percent white students. When bussing was finally ended in 1993, the white student population of SUSD had slipped to 20 percent. It finally dawned on the judge that there was nothing to be gained in bussing Hmong, Laotian, and Vietnamese students across town to interact with Mexican and black students, since the majority had become the minority and the minorities were now majorities. Now that the experiment is over, Stockton, which was known as "Fat City" in the movie of the same name, is the Gary, Indiana, of the West Coast.

—Sam Reed
Lodi, CA

On Secularizing the Faith

As always, Rabbi Jacob Neusner's February article ("Letter From Inner Israel: Christmas, That Winter Festival") is of interest to this hard-shell, pre-Vatican II Roman Catholic. The attempts to secularize the synagogues that Rabbi Neusner discusses could have come from a page out of *Call to Action* and from various dissenting groups intent on "desacralizing" the parishes and especially the worship of the Catholic Church. Maybe there's a manual on this out there somewhere. I suspect we are only following the route pioneered by the once-mighty "mainline" Protestant denominations—now reduced to the virtual status of sects—over the past 60 years.

One has to laugh at the idea of synagogues appointing "program directors [who would] organize all kinds of activi-

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ties that fall outside the range of typical synagogue programs." Neusner adds: "The new programs will promote 'Jewishness' for Jews who want togetherness but no Torah." And they will be run by outside "professionals" who have no real interest in religion, only in "process" and brainwashing. These programs, of course, could fit any denomination, any business—for businesses are just what so many churches have become.

The Jews advocating such programs want to eliminate the authority of the Torah, just as the "cultural Catholics" want to destroy any semblance of authority of the Pope and the Magisterium. And in fact the battle over "authority" is what the end of the 20th century is all about. As a member of a parish that now has 52 committees chasing their respective tails in search of "community," I've begun to think that some "evil conspiracy" is working overtime to make sure that all religions are reduced to the same Orwellian uniformity without a smidgen of divine transcendence.

—Daniel N. Ehart
Wayne, PA

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

THE NATIONAL FRONT'S mayoral victory in the southern French village of Vitrolles, on February 9, was front-page news in Europe and is important for Americans. The NF candidate had been its brilliant deputy chief, Bruno Mégret, who barely lost the 1995 election to Socialist Jean-Jacques Anglade. Vitrolles has a large North African population and 19 percent unemployment. These factors, added to Anglade's corruption, impressive even by Socialist standards, made a Mégret victory likely. So the Gaullist government declared Mégret disqualified to run because he had spent nine percent too much on a 1995 poll. Mégret was replaced by his wife, Catherine, who led in the first round of voting.

At this point, "conservative" prime minister Alain Juppé decided to do what President Jacques Chirac had refused to do in the last election: he withdrew the Gaullist candidate for the mayor's office to create a "democratic front" with the Socialists. It was time to draw the line in the sand, before next year's elections for parliament. All the other parties, from Communists to Christian Democrats (Catholics), threw their support behind the corrupt Anglade. The plan backfired. Catherine Mégret won with an absolute majority of 52.5 percent. The French now have a two-party system, the Socio-Gaullists and the National Front. Issues like immigration and opposition to yielding French sovereignty to the bureaucrats in Brussels and to the common European monetary system are back on the front burner.

The government's diversionary tactic was to push for a vote on a bill which would make French citizens responsible for foreigners on special guest visas who need a French host to sponsor them. It is a common mode of smuggling in illegal aliens. Some "hosts" make as many as 40 or 50 requests a year. Elite and popular opinion split. Sixty filmmakers, 130 magistrates, and the national association of French mayors have denounced the measure, saying they will disobey or refuse to enforce it. Meanwhile, an independent poll reported that 59 percent of French polled approved of the bill and 58 percent disapproved of the elite's plan of "civil disobedience."

American politicians should take note. Polls show that the voters of the two major American parties differ strongly in their positions on national sovereignty, immigration, affirmative action, and rule by judges and bureaucrats. The leadership of the two parties, however, is basically united on these issues. The President worked hand in glove with the Minority Leader, now the Speaker of the House, to pass NAFTA, despite strong popular opposition. The Republican victory in the House in 1994 led to no reduction in the size of the central government, but instead a suicidal attempt to rescue liberal pyramid schemes, such as Social Security and Medicaid. During the grotesque presidential "debates," the President announced he had (finally) discovered an area where he and Mr. Dole disagreed, teenage smoking. (Dole responded that they did not disagree.) Newt Gingrich, with disarming frankness, wrote in *To Renew America* that FDR was "probably the greatest President of the twentieth century." A man who believes this cannot lead the opposition to the regime founded by FDR. Liberal Republicans have headed the Republican tickets in the last two presidential contests, losing disastrously to the most corrupt candidate in American history. Republicans who represent the traditional positions of the party on such issues as immigration and the tariff deserve a chance. Otherwise, Republican voters may decide either not to vote or to turn to a third party. The Doles and Dornans have had their chance. It is now time for an American Bruno Mégret.

—E. Christian Kopff

SO DENG XIAOPING has joined Saint-Just, Molotov, Himmler, Djilas, et al., in that niche of the nether regions reserved for the Unrepentant Accomplices of Ideology-Driven Mass Murderers. One hopes that the place is only a little less unpleasant than that inhabited by their bosses, Robespierre, Stalin, Hitler, Tito, and Company. The fact has been obscured in the mainstream media's comments on Deng's death, but the man was an important participant in Mao's social engineering in the 1950's and 60's which—according to conservative estimates—killed 35 million Chinese men, women, and children.

Deng was a cunning actor in the lurid melodrama of Mao's reign, which occasionally degenerated into a farce, but which was always, in the deepest sense, a human tragedy of colossal magnitude. His difference from his boss was merely one of style: Deng was a rough, hard man from Szechwan who shared something of Mao's coarse brutality, but who was utterly devoid of Mao's interest in politics as an art form. If he had a sense of humor, the secret only came out posthumously, with the announcement that he had bequeathed his organs for transplants and medical research.

While Mao was an "artist" (in the same sense as Hitler was one), Deng was an apparatchik. His dislike of political dramas—the grandest of which was the

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"cultural revolution" three decades ago—was pragmatic, never moral or aesthetic. Whereas Mao was sometimes abstruse, and often aspired to being profound, Deng's quotations were unsuitable for a book, little red or otherwise (e.g., on Marxist ideologues: "They sit on the lavatory and can't even manage to sh-t"). His dislike of "shouting and yelling" was fully applied in 1989 to China's equivalent of Kent State, Tiananmen Square. Deng understood politics in its undiluted form, had no scruples, no "vision thing" beyond being in charge, and no morality. In short, he was someone the United States government could do business with.

So much more the pity, then, that Madeleine Albright's visit to Peking came too late for this wanna-be Metternich to meet Deng. She would have found him a kindred spirit. She, too, believes that ends justify means, and that human life has no intrinsic value, vis. her reply to a question on *60 Minutes* (May 12, 1996) about the death of a half-million Iraqi children as a result of American sanctions: "I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think, is worth it." She, too, understands that "ideology"—which in her scheme of things includes religion, of which she has had three so far—must be subservient to the quest for power, and its exercise.

A meeting with 91-year-old Deng would have been useful to the new Secretary of State's career: he could have dampened her youthful zeal for hyperactivity and confrontation. He would have brushed off her platitudes on "human rights" with a knowing smile. But alas! This was not to be.

At the very least, Mrs. Albright should follow the grand man's footsteps in his recipe for longevity, and take up smoking two packs of high-tar, filter-free cigarettes every day. This would make her instantly popular in the Carolinas, and maybe—just maybe—inject a healthy dose of *memento mori* into her *besoin de faire quelque chose*. In that way Deng may yet perform a favor to the American people, and possibly ease the discomfort of his present abode.

—Srdja Trifkovic

BOERNE, TEXAS, is an unlikely location for a contest over religious freedom, but in 1996 the local Catholic Archbishop decided to sue the city for refusing to allow him to expand a church situated in a zoned historic district. The Archbishop based his case on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which forbids religious persecution and also nullifies laws that are neutral on religion but may impose a burden on religious exercise. A federal judge found the act itself unconstitutional, but this decision was reversed upon appeal. Last October, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

As reported in the press, *City of Boerne* v. *Flores* sounds like a conflict between secular and religious interests. A growing Catholic congregation needs to expand its church facility, and Caesar—in the form of the Boerne city government—refuses, elevating a local zoning ordinance above the freedom of religion guaranteed by the Constitution. But Boerne, Texas, is hardly a hotbed of secular humanism, and the case is a sign not of religious persecution but of the intellectual bankruptcy of the American clergy in general, and of Catholic bishops in particular.

The religious freedom guaranteed by the First Amendment is freedom *from* the federal government. The current interpretation of the 14th Amendment as a justification for federal intrusion into state and local affairs is a bare-faced lie invented by activist Supreme Court judges who deserve neither our respect nor our obedience. But, when even the 14th Amendment could not guarantee the rights of Peyote-using medicine men, Santerians, and Satanists, Congress caved in to pressure from the religion lobby and passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, which begins with the observation that "The Framers of the Constitution, recognizing free exercise of religion as an unalienable right, secured its protection in the First Amendment to the Constitution."

The Solons, like Professor Harry Jaffa, are not smart enough to know the difference between the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. When 18th-century Americans said religion, they meant the Christian religion, and most of them probably did not include Catholics. Jefferson was almost unique in regarding religion as something abstractly worthy of protection, but the Deist Jefferson was not among the Framers of the Constitution.

Since 1993, when the RFRA was passed, dozens upon dozens of suits have been brought. In just the past two years, the courts have been burdened by Muslim convicts demanding time off to adore Mahound without the presence of other Muslims who belong to different sects, by Santerian convicts wanting to wear their voodoo beads in prison, by Sikh schoolchildren demanding the right to take their "ceremonial" knives into the classroom, by "Wiccan" practitioners (a/k/a witches) objecting to surveillance of their "church," by pro-life groups insisting that they have a constitutional right to block the entrances to abortion clinics, and on and on.

Typically, the more exotic cults stand a better chance of success than fundamentalist and pro-life groups, but the point at issue—so it is always said by the religion lobby—is not the attractiveness of the group itself: Moonies, snake-worshipers, and cat-eviscerators have exactly the same religious freedom as Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. In that case, it would be better if there were no religious freedom, particularly when it means that the freedom to cast spells or bite the heads off chickens takes precedence over all the customs and laws of American society.

The test case should be Islam, a religion that has, wherever it is established, systematically persecuted Christians and Jews. Even in the past 20 or 30 years, Muslims have tried to eradicate Christianity from Africa and the Middle East, and yet Muslims who openly use the language of Jihad want to avail themselves of legal protections that were never meant to apply to Islam or Buddhism or Obe.

The Boerne case has nothing to do with the freedom of religion protected in the First Amendment. It is actually a conflict which pits the real and palpable right of cities and states to manage their own affairs against an imaginary right of religion in the abstract. If government can, in the name of religious freedom, suspend self-government in Boerne, what is to prevent that same government from guaranteeing the right of women to become Catholic priests or Orthodox rabbis?

—Thomas Fleming

BILL CLINTON, in David Brinkley's estimation, is a bore, and the majority of the American electorate probably agrees. Moralists deplore a nation that seems willing to indulge an administration ridden by scandal and characterized by every sort of personal vice and immorality.

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Commentators have suggested that had President Clinton been accused of two or five indictable or impeachable acts, he would not today be President of the United States, but the 250 or so offenses of which he is suspected both deaden the imagination and protect the President. More important than their number, perhaps, are the banality and tawdriness of his administration's alleged crimes and misdemeanors: bank and real estate fraud, money laundering, and influence peddling; illicit fundraising, perjury, and the subornation of witnesses; adultery, fornication, solicitation. . . . It is the stuff of cheap novels, bad movies, and worse television concocted by small, conventional, and unimaginative minds for the enjoyment of still lesser intelligences. Even a public titillated by Hollywood and numbed by the national news media becomes jaded. The banality of the Clinton presidency is less the banality of evil than it is the banality of venality. So who cares? Life is short; and the lives of ordinary Americans are filled with banalities and venalities of their own.

Unfortunately, the world—in particular, the political world—is full of banal and boring things that we ignore at our peril. Such are the scandals of the Clinton administration. For the incumbent White House gang, scandal has become a policy of sorts, conveying the assurance of continuity. Like the Little Rascals or Penrod Schofield, the Clintons are perpetually in the soup—which might seem cute or endearing of them, were it not for their status as the nation's First Adults. Like so many of their generation, the First Couple are children at heart, and so their sequential response to being caught out is childishness itself: "I did not!"; "So and so made me do it!"; "Don't spank me! I'll never, *ever*, do it again!" ("Anyway, all the other kids do it.")

Confronted by such behavior, adults, having other matters to attend to, are tempted to overlook it. Yet, "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is a fit maxim of political as well as of domestic life. Most politicians, not just the Clintons, are essentially spoiled children: selfish, self-willed, and vain, lacking self-control and given to threats and tantrums, they are little soft balls of unmolded Original Sin. In the absence of discipline, children and politicians grow into tyrants. The majority of America's overwhelming troubles today are the result of a failure on the part of Americans to pay attention to what their politicians, and their children, are up to, and to call them on the carpet for it. In an age of moral shortcutting, children, politicians, and lawyers—masters of the short cut, all of them—require especial scrutiny. Surreptitiously selling the Lincoln Bedroom as if it were a unit at the No-Tell Motel might appear like a venial sin, until one considers the political legacy of its namesake. President Abraham Lincoln was willing to cut all kinds of constitutional and political corners (in addition to killing and maiming three-quarters of a million men) in order to win a war and save the union (even if that union was largely a figment of his imagination). Today, Lincoln's successor does not hesitate to circumvent every campaign finance law on the books simply to save his own job, even at the expense of mortgaging Lincoln's beloved Union to Hollywood vulgarians and Asian dictators. The American Republic has come a long way, morally speaking, since the days of martyred Abraham.

—*Chilton Williamson, Jr.*

Archbishop William Levada, the Roman Catholic ordinary of San Francisco, and the city's leftist mayor, Willie Brown, squared off last February, and though the debate may continue over who drew more blood, it's clear who was left staggering at the bell. Archbishop Levada sought an exemption for his diocese from San Francisco's new ordinance (which takes effect next month) requiring organizations and businesses contracted by the city to provide employees' "domestic partners" with benefits equal to those provided employees' spouses.

Our Sunday Visitor, in attempting to defend Archbishop Levada, said the new ordinance bound organizations "doing business with the city," whereas the *San Francisco Examiner* said it targeted "organizations receiving municipal funds." For the Roman Catholic Diocese of San Francisco, "doing business with the city" means taking over five million dollars annually to run hospitals and other "social services." Anyone scandalized by that figure should know that the Roman Catholic Church's principal agency for dispensing social services in America, Catholic Charities, receives nearly three quarters of its operating budget from government coffers, rendering suspect such claims as "The Catholic Church is the single largest provider of social services to women" (Helen Alvare, National Council of Catholic Bishops) or "We are the largest provider of HIV housing and services on the West Coast" (Bob Nelson, Catholic Charities). Who, after all, is actually doing the providing? The Church or the State?

If the answer is unclear, it is because the relationship between the two has become more unholy than a "domestic partnership." The Church in the modern world has grown so accustomed to taking the king's shilling that, when it comes time to do the king's bidding, even though it is clearly immoral, the most the faithful can hope for is a face-saving compromise. Complete capitulation is more often the result.

Which is exactly what happened to the 340,000 Catholics in San Francisco. Faced with the loss of five million dollars, Archbishop Levada gave up the threat of legal action (presumably based on the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, famous for overturning the sovereign State of Oregon's laws against dope smoking) and caved in, saying "An employee may designate a legally domiciled member of the employee's household as being eligible for spousal-equivalent benefits." Then, to distract his flock from his semantics, he held a press conference announcing that he hoped to work with the city of San Francisco to achieve universal health care. Read: "If only we had socialized medicine in this country, I would not have to be in the difficult situation of defending the teachings of my Church." Archbishop Levada expects his compromise will set the precedent for other dioceses that run afoul of the state's laws. Perhaps. But for a prince of an institution that ought to be at odds with the modern state, it is an unusual claim.

In fact, Archbishop Levada's eagerness to make peace with the state is a symptom of a deeper problem in the Church. In researching why, for example, certain Roman Catholic hospitals in America dispense artificial contraception at their pharmacies, I have been told by Church officials that Catholic health care is today faced with a "matter of survival." Alas, to go to hell over a mere matter of markets. One is reminded of Screwtape lamenting the poor quality of souls coming into Hell these days: "The municipal authority with Graft sauce" but lacking the least hint of the "brutal avarice such as delighted one of the great tycoons of the last century," or the "luke-

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warm Casserole of Adulterers" who had "trickled into the wrong beds in automatic response to sexy advertisements" but are wholly without any trace of "defiant, rebellious, insatiable lust."

It bears mention that Archbishop Levada did more than merely miss a chance to set his Church apart from the world. He missed a chance to defend marriage and the family. He might, for example, have dismissed the city's new ordinance by succinctly declaring that his diocese would not knowingly employ any "domestic partners" (hetero, homo, or otherwise), but that he would use this opportunity to clean his stables just the same. He might also have defended the many small—presumably family-owned—businesses in San Francisco, for which doing business with the city truly is a question of survival. How are they to weather the additional expense of insuring a profligate community—its identifying behavior and attendant health risks aside—that abuses drugs at twice the rate of the general population?

There are legitimate reasons for the Church's involvement in Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Natural Law, alone, requires that societies look after their wretched. In the end, however, each wretched person with whom the Church comes in contact is a soul to be saved. That way is narrow, difficult, and unpopular with the world. A Church unwilling to tread that path cannot hope to light the way for others.

—*Christopher Check*

EPICYCLES:

• Well, Hello Dolly: The announcement in late February that a sheep had successfully been cloned was greeted with both surprise and debate. At first, there seemed to be agreement that **cloning technology** should never be used on humans. Why a country which aborts 1.3 million babies a year and tolerates serial killers like Jack Kevorkian should be so concerned about the use of cloning technology is unclear (perhaps because cloning brings life into the world?). But the consensus quickly broke down. A Chicago talk radio show spent an entire day discussing the virtue of cloning 100,000 Michael Jordans (yes, the majority of callers were white). Meanwhile, while liberal and atheist ethicists insisted that the federal government should ban human cloning, and President Clinton quickly complied, religious leaders began to prepare for the possibility of human cloning. One Methodist minister weighed in with the opinion that humans should not be cloned, but that, if they were, the only real danger would lie in the possibility that some clones might be "programmed" to think themselves better than others. Apparently man may usurp the prerogatives of God, but he may not question the egalitarian dogmas of democracy.

• More Legalized Extortion: **Citibank** is the latest corporation to be sued for racial discrimination because of a tasteless joke. Two white Citibank employees have been fired and two others suspended for transmitting via e-mail a supposedly racist joke which a white worker then showed to two black employees. The e-mail was sent from a white employee's home terminal and was never sent to the black workers who filed the lawsuit; nor did the joke in any way cast aspersions specifically on the black employees who stand to make millions off this suit. But no matter. As the attorney for the plaintiffs said, "These were all white people saying bad things about black people and trying to keep it secret." Forget the lesson about "sticks and stones," and throw out "due process"; words can bring a windfall.

• Reality Check: "**Cybercommunity**" is all the rage, and Americans are going "on-line" in record numbers, ignoring their neighbors and families for those they have met on the World Wide Web. Taking a mechanistic understanding of human life to the extreme, the proponents of "cybercommunity" have reduced community to a series of electronic impulses, devoid of any real human contact. Not surprisingly, then, pornographic sites have proliferated on the Web. At the 1997 Consumer Electronics Show, the biggest attraction was the "Adult Software" section, which promoted Web sites featuring live sex acts. According to the Associated Press, men "waited for up to half an hour for the chance to embrace scantily clad porn stars and get them to autograph a free T-shirt or photograph." The report didn't mention where their wives and girlfriends were.

Of course, none of them may have found a "cybersoulmate" yet. Perhaps they will have more luck than the Virginia woman who, after four months of marriage, discovered that the man she had met in an America On-Line "chat room" was really a woman. Apparently love *can* conquer all differences.

• State Sovereignty: The **Confederate heritage groups** in Maryland have won a Pyrrhic victory. As noted in these pages in March, the Maryland Motor Vehicle Association, under pressure from "civil rights" groups, recalled 78 Maryland license plates bearing a small logo of the Confederate Battle Flag. One member of the Sons of Confederate Veterans, determined to keep his license plate, took the State of Maryland to federal court—and won. But in using a *federal* court to trump states' rights, a more important battle was lost.

OBITER DICTA: *Chronicles* is illustrated this month by **Stephen Anderson**, a folk artist based in Rockford, Illinois. Mr. Anderson, who is self-taught, is affiliated with the Phyllis Kind Gallery in Chicago and New York.

John Frederick Nims, a poet and translator living in Chicago, has contributed four of his translations of Michelangelo to this issue. The author of *Sappho to Valéry: Poems in Translation*, Mr. Nims has also written eight volumes of original verse, the latest of which is *The Six-Cornered Snowflake*. Mr. Nims has been Phi Beta Kappa commencement poet at Harvard and a Fulbright scholar in Florence, Italy.

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Stephen Anderson

Utopias Unlimited

by Thomas Fleming

The future has been all the rage for the past two centuries. Modernism, as an ideology, might almost be defined as the cult of the future, whether in science fiction or in utopian political creeds like Marxism. Even in its death throes modernism was able to spawn "futurology," a pseudo-science as richly comic as phrenology. An obsession with the future is usually taken as a sign of naive optimism, but the most influential futurist of the century, H.G. Wells, was profoundly pessimistic, and if his heirs—the Tofflers, for example—exhibit a cheery confidence in what the future holds, it is only because their writings are the intellectual equivalent of a lobotomy.

On the verge of despair, we put our faith in the future: we buy lottery tickets, change jobs after reading the message in a fortune cookie, pick stocks on the basis of a lucky number or a broker's recommendation. Confirmed atheists on their deathbed call for a priest, not necessarily because they now believe, but because eternity is the only future left. Horace, advising a mistress against astrology, gave his famous advice to "seize the day, putting as little stock as you can in tomorrow." Entire societies may become infected with futurism, and since the Renaissance, as our social conditions have become more and more detached from the roots of human experience, intellectuals of every kind have been constructing utopias—architectural sketches for the world tomorrow that no one will ever, in his worst nightmare, inhabit.

Progressivism in any form is an indication of alienation and discontent. In the so-called Middle Ages, on the other hand, which must have been as uncomfortable as any since men learned how to smelt copper, most people knew the difference between the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of Man. The interest that a Christian people takes in the future should be limited to practical and down-to-earth questions: Whom should I marry? Under what moon should I sow the rye?

In those days literate men looking for clues to the future would perform the *sortes virgiliane* by opening a text of Vergil at random. The practice has not died out, entirely, and there are people who leaf through Shakespeare or the King James Bible as if they were taking the auguries. In Wilkie Collins' *The Moonstone*, the house-steward begins his account by citing an appropriate passage of *Robinson Crusoe*, which he had come upon by accident. "If that isn't prophecy," he asks, "what is?" The steward had worn out seven copies of his favorite book, while I, on the other hand, have gone through any number of recordings of *The Mikado*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, and *Iolanthe*. They have exhausted themselves keeping the promise the Queen of the Fairies made to Strephon: "Shouldst thou be in doubt or danger, / Peril or perplexitee, / Call us, and we'll come to thee!" And over the past few months I have come to believe that my views on equality were shaped by *The Gondoliers*, my distaste for feminism inspired by *Princess Ida*, and my contempt for social and political idealism—and ideology—nourished by W.S. Gilbert's satires on the rigors of class structure, chauvinism, party loyalty, and romantic love.

Invective and realistic social criticism, which satisfied later and inferior writers like Ibsen and Shaw, were not in Gilbert's line. He preferred to construct utopian fantasies and upside-down worlds in which his contemporaries could see themselves as in a funhouse mirror. In 1875, his play *Topsyturvydom* portrayed a country where people are born old and wise but gradually youthen and forget everything. In the stage set, the chan-

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delier rose from the floor, while the furniture was fixed to the ceiling. In her recent W.S. *Gilbert: A Classic Victorian and His Theatre* (Oxford University Press), Jane Stedman describes Gilbert's vision of a "double world: one part consisting of things or principles as they are, and the other consisting of ideas about or attitudes toward these things and principles; a world of truth and a world of what we think is reality—two separate worlds which are only intermittently synonymous."

Topsyturvydom was produced only months before the first successful collaboration between William Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, *Trial by Jury*, but Gilbert's technique was already well-advanced in his *Bab Ballads*, where we meet the prototype for *Topsyturvydom* as well as the originals of characters made familiar in the Savoy operas: the common soldier who discovers that he and his general were switched at birth, a curate named George, the son of a fairy who objects to his High Church proclivities ("To this / Papal rule-ish / Twaddle put an ending; This a swerve is / From our service / Plain and unpretending"). When the bishop finds him embracing his young and beautiful mother, he refuses to believe she is not a hussy of two and twenty. The curate takes umbrage: "George the point grew warm on; / Changed religion / Like a pigeon, / And became a Mormon!"

My favorite topsyturvy ballad concerns "Gentle Alice Brown," daughter of a family of Italian robbers. Alice falls in love with a poor but honest man and goes to make her confession to the village priest, who is indulgent toward her peccadilloes of kidnapping, burglary, and murder: "You mustn't judge yourself too heavily my dear. / It's wrong to murder babies, little corals for to fleece; / But sins like these one expiates at half-a-crown apiece." But, when she confesses her innocent dalliance, the good father is outraged:

> This dreadful piece of news will pain your worthy parents so!
> They are the most remunerative customers I know;
> For many many years they've kept starvation from my doors;
> I never knew so criminal a family as yours!

The hapless young man is chopped into particularly small pieces, and Alice is wed to her father's lieutenant.

In turning the conventional on its head, Gilbert was able to see into the paradoxes that lay just beneath the surface of Victorian morality. His favorite plot device—which he never succeeded in selling to Sullivan—was of a magic lozenge which turned people into what they pretended to be. Sullivan wanted something more human, but Gilbert gave him a series of utopias and fantasies that were as topsyturvy as he could make them: a magic potion that makes people fall in love with the first member of the opposite sex they encounter, a family curse that condemns the baronets of Ruddigore to "do a crime a day or die," the appointment of a condemned man to the position of executioner on the grounds that "he cannot cut off another's head until he's cut his own off."

Like Alice Brown and the baronets of Ruddigore, many of Gilbert's characters are trapped in an allegiance to something essentially absurd or wrong. The Mikado of Japan does not actually wish to execute Ko Ko, Poo Bah, and Pitti Sing by boiling them in oil, but they have unknowingly executed the heir to the throne, who has been traveling in disguise as a wandering minstrel. The Mikado quite understands, thinks perhaps his son got what he deserved, but, unfortunately, the law in question says nothing about a mistake. Cheer up, he tells them, "I'll have it altered next session. Now let's see about your execution—will after luncheon suit you?" The baronets of Ruddigore do not enjoy committing a crime a day, but what are they to do? It is a family tradition, or rather curse.

This message of affable cynicism is often conveyed by a worldly wise older man who is variously the Pirate King, the Mikado, and the Grand Inquisitor in *The Gondoliers*. In *H.M.S. Pinafore*, the cynical baritone is poor Dick Deadeye who sums up Gilbert's view of life with his, "It's a queer world." Dick ought to know. Cursed with an ugly name and a still uglier face, he cannot say "nice day" without incurring quite literally a chorus of disapproval. When Dick repeats the Boatswain's warning that the captain's daughter will never marry a simple sailor like Ralph Rackstraw, the boatswain tells him, "Them sentiments of yourn are a disgrace to our common natur."

In the recently republished *The Complete Annotated Gilbert and Sullivan* (Oxford University Press), Ian Bradley describes Dick as "the nearest that Gilbert comes . . . to creating the archetypal stage villain of Victorian melodrama," but Dick is more of a Cassandra than a villain. He is resigned to being hated for his looks, and he knows that on his lips "the noblest sentiments sound like the black utterances of a depraved imagination" (a charge the critics often leveled against Gilbert's cruel brand of humor). Dick's paradoxical nature illustrates the central point of *Pinafore*, whose plot turns on the distinction between a man's true nature and the position he holds in society—the simple sailor turns out to be the captain and vice versa.

Sir Joseph Porter, First Lord of the Admiralty, is convinced that "love levels all ranks," and when he explains his doctrine of equality to the crew, they naturally assume that he is putting them on his own level. Only Dick understands reality: "He means well, but he don't know. When people have to obey other people's orders, equality is out of the question." But in Gilbert's upside-down world, Sir Joseph—the "monarch of the sea" who knows nothing of the navy—is applauded, while Dick is excoriated. In the end, when Buttercup reveals the truth, Ralph and the Captain exchange places, and in most productions the Captain begins speaking in a Cockney accent. His duty is not to anything in his real life (e.g., his daughter, his crew), but to the social position he has inherited.

Under the sinister influence of Immanuel Kant, the public morality of the 19th century was dangerously deontological, that is, duty-bound. Schopenhauer pointed out the absurdity of Kant's insistence upon a universal duty owed by all human beings, regardless of circumstances, and Gilbert put the dilemma on the stage in the person of young Frederic, "the slave of duty" in the *Pirates of Penzance*. As a boy, Frederic was mistakenly apprenticed to a pirate band (his father wanted him to be a pilot, but his nurse was hard of hearing). The young man hates piracy, and he is not persuaded by the Pirate King's declaration that

> Many a king on a first-class throne,
> If he wants to call his crown his own,
> Must manage somehow to get through
> More dirty work than ever I do.

But out of a sense of duty, he will not abandon the pirates until he has reached the age of 21, when the term of his indenture

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will have expired. On the day of his liberation he meets and affiances the daughter of Major General Stanley, and it becomes his duty to lead a squad of timid policemen against the friends of his youth. There is, however, a wrinkle, or rather a paradox. It seems that Frederic was born in a leap year, on February 29, and as the King explains: "Though you have lived 21 years, yet if we go by birthdays, you are only five and a little bit over."

Frederic's duty is plain: he must delay his marriage to Mable (who promises to wait until 1940, while complaining, "It seems so long") and rejoin the pirates who are planning to murder his future father-in-law, who had secured the release of his daughters from the marriage-mad pirates by claiming to be an orphan. (While the Major General, too, has a conscience, he cannot quite bring himself to confess his sin to the Pirate King.) When the pirates defeat the police and seize the Major General, only a *deus ex machina* can save the day. In this case the *deus* (or rather *dea*) is Queen Victoria in whose name the pirates are commanded to surrender. But even the pirates are not beyond redemption. "They are no men of the common throng. They are all noblemen who have gone wrong." The Major General, declaring that Englishmen, for all their faults, love their House of Peers, pardons the pirates and gives them his daughters.

These irreverent digs at royalty and peerage are not casual bits of fun. Victorian rigorism was embedded in a social system that equated worth with status. Gilbert was no leveler, but he was convinced that many criminals are victims of circumstance. Rich people do not steal from shops, because they do not need to, and if they do go wrong—like the pirates or Michael Milken—they will never lack for apologists. In his ballad "Mister William" the hero, an otherwise good man who forges a will "as an experiment," assuages his conscience by reflecting that "the greater the temptation to go wrong, the less the sin." Convicted of his crime William suffers from the unaccustomed harshness of prison life, his gaolers take pity on him, arguing, "He ain't been brought up common, like the likes of me and you." Eventually Mr. William is released with an apology from the Secretary.

With the exception of the cowardly police, everyone in the *Pirates* has a strict sense of right and wrong. With a thrill in her voice, Mabel tells the policemen to march off to "glory and the grave"; the pirates' merciful creed forbids them to harm orphans, and once the word got out, all of their victims claimed to be orphans. Ruth, the nursemaid, when she realizes her mistake, resolves to stick with her master, becoming "a piratical maid of all work." Piling absurdity upon paradox, Gilbert has managed to satirize moral rigorism by revealing its vicious consequences. In the name of duty, a good man is willing to betray and murder his childhood friends and the father of the woman he loves, although, as he says, "It breaks my heart to betray the honored father of the girl I adore." In an earlier version of the same plot, *Our Island Home* (1870), a similarly indentured pirate captain comes upon a group of castaways and informs them that it is his duty, unpleasant though it be, to murder them all. He persists in his resolution even after realizing that two of his victims are his long-lost parents. As his father explains: "I wouldn't have him break his articles of apprenticeship on my account. I always taught him a scrupulous adherence to his engagements, and I am glad—very glad . . . [shaking the pirate's hand] to see that you have not forgotten my precepts."

There is more here than poking fun at Victorian morality whose emphasis on duty had made heroes of the soldiers sacrificed at Balaclava (Gilbert was an armchair expert on the Crimean War) and would slaughter untold thousands in the Great War, for nothing. Frederic has made a religion out of obedience, and while his fanaticism owes much to the pieties so vigorously promoted by his beloved Queen, his lofty devotion to duty is only one aspect of the liberal tradition of ethics going back to Kant, Locke, and Descartes. Gilbert's idiotic hero gets himself in trouble for embracing precisely the sort of universalist ethics that Englishmen had been taught for two centuries, and the situation could only be resolved (and the murder avoided) by an old-fashioned appeal to the love and loyalty that even bad men may feel for their country and their sovereign. Yet Gilbert can play it both ways. The pirates are absurdly tenderhearted when it comes to Queens and orphans, but their misplaced loyalty and ridiculous sentimentalism are far more human than Frederic's cult of duty or the Major General's prickly conscience.

Frederic is a decent, if dunderheaded young man, but Gilbert carries the satire further in the person of Dick Dauntless, the young sailor in *Ruddigore*. Dick is the foster brother of Ruthven Murgatroyd, who is by right the latest "bad baronet" of Ruddigore, but Ruthven has disguised himself as a farmer (under the name Robin Oakapple). Too shy to propose to Rose, he asks his apparently good-hearted foster brother to intercede. He and Robin had sworn an oath that they "would always act upon our hearts' dictates," and when he sees how beautiful she is, he proposes on his own account. When Rose learns the truth, she prefers Robin, but Dick has another trick up his sleeve, and he reveals Robin's true identity to his younger brother, who has been reluctantly upholding the family honor by committing a crime a day. At the wedding, Sir Despard denounces Robin, and when Rose asks "who is the wretch who has betrayed thee?" Dick replies:

> Within this breast there beats a heart
> Whose voice can't be gainsaid.
> It bade me thy true rank impart,
> And I at once obeyed
> I knew 'twould blight thy budding fate—
> I knew 'twould cause thee anguish great—
> But did I therefore hesitate?
> No I at once obeyed.

Gilbert has sometimes been censured for introducing Dick, in Act One, with a silly song in which he boasts of English courage against the French. But the whole point of the song is to reveal Dick as a dishonest blowhard who explains that his sloop did not attack a French frigate, because "to fight a French fa lal, it's like hitting of a gal." The French were outraged but, like most critics, they missed the point. Dick Dauntless is the very opposite of the ugly but honest Dick Deadeye. Dauntless is handsome, strong, as sentimental as a greeting card, but essentially selfish and hypocritical.

The mistaken indenture is only a variation on his "lozenge plot" (the same might be said of Kafka's "Metamorphosis"). In his most effective political satire, however, he asks us to laugh at English customs dressed up in Japanese costumes, to see the absurdity of English republican arguments when they are propounded by Venetian gondoliers, and in his penultimate collaboration with Sullivan, to understand the corruption of English politics by watching a Southsea paradise (whose name is Utopia) as it turns itself into an English limited stock

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company.

The plot of *Utopia, Limited* may well have been too complex for an audience expecting an evening of cheerful tunes and lighthearted absurdity, but the libretto is one of Gilbert's best. Paramount, the Anglomaniac king of Utopia, is a despot in name, but he lives under the shadow of the public exploder, who is empowered to blow up the king with dynamite at the first sign of misbehavior. In *The Gondoliers*, Gilbert had played with a monarchy "that's tempered with republican equality," but in Utopia's "despotism tempered with dynamite," the king is forced to write and publish libels about his own entirely fictitious vices and follies. But, as the king is fond of saying, "It's a quaint world."

His daughter, who has been educated in England, returns to Utopia, bringing with her "the flowers of progress" (the opera's subtitle): a military man, a lawyer, a Lord High Chamberlain (to censor morals), a county councillor, Captain Corcoran (straight out of *Pinafore*), and Mr. Goldbury, a "company promoter." The promoter explains the limited liability company as a means of investing the least money at the least risk for the greatest profit. And if the company goes belly up, well, that is too bad for the investors but not for the promoters:

> Though a Rothschild you may be
> In your own capacity,
> As a Company you've come to utter sorrow
> But the liquidators say,
> "Never mind—you needn't pay"
> So you start another company tomorrow.

At first the king is dubious about turning his entire kingdom into a limited liability company. "I do understand you," he asks Goldbury, "that Great Britain / Upon this Joint Stock principle is governed?" The promoter answers, "We haven't come to that yet, but— / We're tending rapidly in that direction."

Goldbury is given the go-ahead and applies the limited liability principle to every individual in the realm, and before long "there is not a christened baby in Utopia who has not already issued his little prospectus." (This sounds like Washington, D.C., where every policy-geek and political gopher has his own think-tank or institute.) The king's first cabinet meeting is conducted as a minstrel show, complete with banjo and bones—a satiric touch that we may find disquieting for more than one reason.

The flowers of progress turn out to be weeds, unfortunately, and all the little pleasures of utopian life are ruined:

> Utopia swamped by dull prosperity
> Demands that these detested
> Flowers of Progress
> Be sent about their business.

The situation appears hopeless until the English-educated princess advises the king to introduce one last British-style reform, namely "government by party," which will bring progress to a halt: "No political measures will endure because one Party will assuredly undo all that the other Party has done; and while grouse is to be shot and foxes worried to death, the legislative action of the country will be at a standstill." Half a genuine loaf, Gilbert seems to be saying, is better than an entire pastry-shop filled with imaginary delights that can only be enjoyed in some future state.

Utopia, Limited opened in 1893, and had a limited success. The partners were long since tired of each other's company, and, as the 20th century loomed nearer, Gilbert's humor seemed increasingly dated. He went on to write other plays, but his greatest successes were behind him, and when he died in 1910, he was already an institution of the previous reign. By then, Wells had already written *The Time Machine* and *The War of the Worlds*, and the science fiction industry was on its way to being established on the broken dreams of the American Century. The Savoy operas have been kept alive, partly for the brightness of Gilbert's wit and the beauty of Sullivan's music, but they have also suffered from a deadening nostalgia for times gone by.

Gilbert was himself a man of no particular party. He was as suspicious of progressive levelers as he was contemptuous of the conservative defenders of entrenched interests. Between the improbable glories of past golden ages and the impossible beauties of the paradise that awaits us, just around the corner, once the public exploders have done their job—there was little to choose. Like Sir Thomas More, he knew that the real purpose of utopias was satiric, that such fantasies are of no positive use in planning a society. If Plato thought otherwise, then Plato was wrong. Like Trollope, W.S. Gilbert is the wholesome Victorian antidote to the poisonous fantasies of Nietzsche, Marx, and Freud, and taken in regular doses, his works will reform the manners, as well as the meters, of our degenerate times. ◁▷

Sonnet 105

by Michelangelo

Translated by John Frederick Nims

(*Non vider gli occhi miei cosa mortale . . .*)

My gaze saw no mere mortal on the day
I found in your fine eyes quiet like none
on earth, so pure I saw therein the One
who storms my soul with love—a soul like its own.
And weren't my spirit drawn from God's alone,
earth's outward beauty had left it so aglow
that it longed for nothing. Mirage, all that! And so
it soared to the universal form straightway.
When one lives—true life, I mean—his will won't mesh
with mortality; nor are things eternal cast
in the mold of time. For skin and bone, no haven.
Untamed desire's not love, just a flush of flesh,
and it kills the soul. Our honest love makes fast
friendships on earth. Death, faster though, in heaven.

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Science Fiction, R.I.P.

by Thomas F. Bertonneau

Stephen Anderson

To register the obituary long after the fact: science fiction is dead. Aficionados of the genre who acquired their taste for it in the 1950's and 60's probably already know this. What they might not know is that the death of science fiction has significance for the state of American culture in 1997.

With the odd exceptions of Stanislaw Lem (a Pole), the brothers Strugatsky (two Russians), and a tiny handful of American authors, no one has written science fiction in the last two decades that is worthy of the name. Indeed, most of the prominent practitioners of the genre (virtually all of them Americans) have passed on; the 1980's and 90's saw the deaths of Robert A. Heinlein, Clifford D. Simak, Isaac Asimov, and many others who pioneered the field in the 1930's and 40's when it reached print in pulp monthlies like *Amazing Stories* and *Astounding Science Fiction*. Ray Bradbury—God bless him—is still among us, as irascible as ever, but his *Martian Chronicles* belongs to 1952, and he has long since deemphasized science fiction in favor of other modes, like detective fiction and Whitmanesque poetry. The Englishman Arthur C. Clarke is another living legend, but nothing that he has written since the early 60's comes anywhere near measuring up to *Childhood's End* (1952) or *The City and the Stars* (1956), his two masterpieces. Minor geniuses also belong among the departed, or, though still living, have long since dropped out of print. I would recommend the work of Henry Kuttner, Catherine Moore, Leigh Brackett, A.E. van Vogt, Cyril Kornbluth, Cordwainer Smith, James Blish, Walter M. Miller, Robert Sheckley, James Gunn, Algis Budrys, Chad Oliver, or William Tenn. But unless one knows a good secondhand shop, none of their work is available.

Yes, the rubric of science fiction remains. But publishers today favor the prolific and mediocre serialists (many of them female MFAs) who churn out a treacly mixture of dragon-lore, pseudo-epic, cyberpunk, and 12-step philosophizing, much of it stylistically indistinguishable from the romance novels that the authors would otherwise, and perhaps do, compose. The books in question boast names like *Spellfire*, *Abyssal Warriors*, *The Dolphins of Pern*, *Fire Sea*, *Elfenquest*, *Into the Labyrinth*, and *Sacred Ground*. The cover artists depict improbably knowledgeable teenage girls communing with Disneyesque animals, antique sailing ships navigating mysterious seas, and Fabio-like shamans taming anthropomorphic dragons. What John Clute says in *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction* about Anne McCaffrey, author of the popular *Pern* series, applies to many authors working in a similar vein. Soon after *Restoree* (1967), McCaffrey "began publishing the linked novels and stories that have made her reputation as a writer of romantic, heightened tales of adventure explicitly designed to appeal—and to make good sense to—a predominantly female adolescent audience." To visit the science fiction section, so-called, of the local Borders or Barnes and Noble is, for a 40-year-old connoisseur, a depressing experience.

I think that the death of science fiction is one of the late 20th century's small but genuine tragedies. It is also a symptom of the radical decivilization, predicted by many science fiction writers, that now characterizes the West and, in particular, America. At its best, in the thoughtful pastorals of a Simak, in the Platonic fantasies of a Stapledon, or in the savage satires of a Tenn, science fiction maintained a high level of intelligence; it presumed a level of general knowledge, a familiarity with art, history, science, and philosophy, which contemporary commercial writers simply cannot take for granted in their readers and likely do not possess themselves. In a dumbed-down world, genuine science fiction yields to overproduced film-spectacu-

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lars and to endless narratizations of the adolescent role-playing game "Dungeons and Dragons." The rocketships, space aliens, and other paraphernalia are still on hand, but the impoverished sensibility of the mass audience has banished everything else.

Consider last summer's *Independence Day*, which raked in big bucks and has since acquired cult status. Despite the fact that the film represents the vaunted state-of-the-art in computer-generated special effects, it fails even at the level of its visual impression. The gigantic alien ships remain disappointingly static, and the knobby alien fighter-craft fly so swiftly as to be optically unintelligible; the epic dogfights between terrestrial combat jets and their alien counterparts, modeled on similar but more successful sequences in *Star Wars*, likewise baffle the eye. The film's aliens stupidly forget to install a virus-protection program in their mainframe.

Independence Day has neither the visual excitement nor the intelligence of George Pal's superb 1953 film of an alien invasion, *The War of the Worlds*, based meticulously on H. G. Wells' novel of 1898. Pal's Martians arrive in clunky steel cylinders, but when they emerge, encased in sleek, boomerang-shaped "war machines," they take on a relentless menace that works from the moment of their implacable appearance until the film's final scenes. Five minutes before Pal's film ends, viewers might really be in doubt about the issue. The cornily predictable *Independence Day* in fact plunders *The War of the Worlds* without knowing what to do with the booty (both films feature, at midpoint, an atomic attack against the invaders undertaken by a flying wing, and there are many other specific borrowings), and the former never induces a suspension of disbelief.

But it fails by comparison in other ways, too. In Pal's *The War of the Worlds*, for example, when the Martians break out of their landing site and begin annihilating the tanks and planes ranged against them, none of the characters cracks a joke. Critics might object that Gene Barry acts rather stiffly in his role as a nuclear physicist who witnesses the debacle, but he manages to convey the deadly seriousness of the situation. As the Martians commence their fiery slaughter, there is no defense, and Barry registers this fact. In *Independence Day*, after every last one of his wing-mates has been blasted out of the sky by the interlopers, Will Smith sucker-punches an extraterrestrial and makes jokes that might have been lifted from *The Jeffersons* or *Fresh Prince*. One of the basic elements of authentic science fiction is plausibility, and the sole survivor of his fighter-wing on an Earth being pulverized by aliens would not crack made-for-TV one-liners. Give me Barry's Clayton Forrester.

In *The War of the Worlds*, the Martians systematically destroy Los Angeles. Never having heard of computer-generated images, special effects master Pal worked effectively with cardboard-and-plaster miniatures. Despite the limitations of his means, his scenes of destruction acquire a certain pathos. *Independence Day* lacks such pathos; its destruction of Los Angeles consists of so much cinematic *wow!* followed by soap-opera posturing and more made-for-TV one-liners. *Earth vs. the Flying Saucers* (1956) and *This Island Earth* (1955) treat the alien-invasion theme far more seriously than does *Independence Day*. They exploit a Cold War angst which lends them moral gravity.

Masculine values have also been banished from the field. Barry's character in Pal's film acquires a love-interest, but Pal never lets romance stand in the way of thought and action. On the other hand, a good share of the plot in *Independence Day* concerns the fate of Will Smith's girlfriend (a goldhearted cliché of a stripper) and her fatherless son in the smoking debris of Los Angeles, to the probable horror of which they seem oblivious. (Millions lie dead, but at least they saved the family dog.) Jeff Goldblum, the other male lead, is a computer nerd who spends a lot of time chatting with his gay friend (Harvey Fierstein) and making up with his estranged wife. No 1950's director would have mucked up the plot with such irrelevant material.

Of course, science fiction is (or was) primarily a literary genre. Wells and Stapledon brought science fiction to a high level, artistically and philosophically. Clarke, Simak, Bradbury, Miller, Edgar Pangborn, and John Wyndham did their creditable best to sustain that achievement. Marginally artistic writers like Heinlein and John W. Campbell (who edited *Astounding Science Fiction* for 34 years) nevertheless wrote with a verve totally lacking in their contemporary counterparts. Perhaps, because the genre was new in those days, the innovations were fresher and the sense of wonder was higher. So audacious were Campbell's interstellar battles and titanic machinery in their day (see *The Black Star Passes* or *The Incredible Planet*) that readers could not have worried much about their absurdity. They were likely asking themselves, what will he do next and can the scale grow any greater? (The answer was always yes.) In the aftermath of *Star Wars*, everyone has seen planets and suns explode, and fleets of space-dreadnoughts nuke it out with each other in the nebular gulfs. Like the audiences of gladiatorial spectacle, we are jaded. Even in the case of a professionally competent and intellectually rigorous writer like Ben Bova, who endeavors to uphold the "hard science fiction" values of the Campbell era, one senses a certain stiffness or artificiality in the prose, as though the story has been told too many times and no longer possesses its original suppleness. The infusions of mild eroticism and slick romance strike one as attempts to enliven a formula that threatens to go stale. One also judges (at least I do) that the dialogue resembles movie or television dialogue, as in Bova's *Empire Builders* (1993): "Don't you understand? The world is being choked to death by the greenhouse effect. The best way to reverse the greenhouse effect is to plant trees. Billions of trees!" The themes, too, are calculatedly topical, having to do with eco-politics and global warming. At one point, to drive the narrative lesson home, a *tsunami* overwhelms New Orleans. Bova is not at all a bad writer. He does his best to uphold the Campbellian tradition to which he is, in many ways, the chief heir. (He succeeded Campbell as editor of *Astounding*, which by that time had changed its name to *Analog*.) Yet a dumbed-down popular culture seems to suborn even the best of contemporary commercial practitioners in the field.

Recursive influence from the films might explain the reduction of literary science fiction to formulaic banality. Science fiction's assimilation to Hollywood, commencing in the mid-1930's, probably signaled the beginning of its end. If most science fiction movies have been artistically far below the level of most science fiction stories, there has latterly been a convergence in quality, with most science fiction novels, original or not, resembling synopses of exceedingly nonliterary movies. If Campbell's *The Mightiest Machine* (1934) is the typical science fiction story, then director Frederick Stephani's *Flash Gordon* (1936) is the typical science fiction movie, and the compromise between them will inevitably be in the direction of the latter.

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But it is possible to identify more proximate reasons for the genre's extinction. Two are obvious, one is less so.

The first obvious reason is the decline, if not yet the demise, of scientific literacy among the American populace. In a recent survey, only 15 percent of Americans could define terms like "molecule" or "element." Once science had been replaced by "science studies," as it has at many universities, the criterion of *rigor*, to which the classic practitioners of the genre tried to remain faithful, quickly became meaningless. Nonrigorous practitioners will invade the arena and the most vulgar taste will prevail. Thus, most of the stuff that fills the shelves advertised as science fiction at Borders or Barnes and Noble is about witches, dragons, and quasi-medieval swordplay; it is also about self-esteem, androgyny, and all sorts of therapeutic schlock. It is not even low-grade Burroughs (not so bad a writer, in any case); it is low-grade Tolkien thinned out further with admixtures of Carlos Castaneda, Gaia worship, and vulgarized "chaos theory." The death of science fiction and the demoralization of the space program largely stem from the same source: public indifference to science as a meaningful endeavor.

Overt politicization is a second reason for the decline in science fiction standards; it constitutes perhaps the fatal influence on the field. I trace this to two sources: Ursula K. Le Guin, who brought her feminist/left-wing outlook to mock-anthropological narratives like *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and *The Dispossessed* (1974); and Samuel R. Delany, a left-winger like Le Guin, who infused the gay political agenda and elements of homosexual pornography into his avant-garde novels *Triton* (1976) and *Dhalgren* (1981) and who, as a tenured deconstructor of comparative literature at Amherst, completed the colonization of science fiction by the English Department. There are others, but Le Guin and Delany can stand for the rest. Once they had finished with science fiction, the genre now found its *raison d'être* in affirming radical relativism and legitimizing the particular programs which required radical relativism for their fulfillment. Science fiction, in other words, would now differ in no way from any other branch of postmodern discourse.

Earlier writers had undeniable political affiliations. Wells and Stapledon certainly did, and at a lower but still impressive level, so did Weinbaum and Asimov. They were, respectively, Edwardian and Rooseveltian socialists. But they were more Edwardian and Rooseveltian, in the final analysis, than socialist, and their politics little influenced their writing. Delany and Le Guin belong to the same philosophical and political world as Derrida, Foucault, Fish, and Company, which is to say that they are more political, more Marxist-Gay/Feminist, than anything else. Their writing is the expression of their politics. As such it is tendentious in the extreme. (Ironically, while Delany and Le Guin were putting a neo-Marxist polish on the genre, Lem and the two Strugatskys were finding the workers' paradise in Poland and the Soviet Union less than fully congenial. Lem finally went into exile in Austria. The Strugatskys contented themselves with foreign publication of internally unacceptable works.)

It might be argued that Heinlein had much earlier attempted to politicize science fiction in the direction of the right (*Sixth Column*, *The Starship Troopers*); but I have the same critical misgiving about Heinlein's politicization of the genre that I do about Delany's or Le Guin's. It produced propaganda, not art. (The unabridged version of *Stranger in a Strange Land*, issued in 1990, only proves that Heinlein's editors exercised considerable wisdom in cutting away the worst of the preachments.)

Other science fiction writers have also been academics, as are Delany and Le Guin. Tenn, that master of the satirical short, is an example. The 1960's saw him ensconced at Penn State in the writing program, but by that time he had just about finished being a science fiction writer. In any case, Tenn seems to have been only technically an academic. His spirit always dwelt elsewhere.

Juxtapose, for example, a passage from Delany's "Afterword" to his *Stars in my Pockets like Grains of Sand* (1984) with a passage from a Tenn story, "Flirgleflip," published more than 30 years before (1950). According to Delany, drawing on two Marxist critics, Jameson and Robinson, science fiction (including his own) is now a

> postmodernist form which, through an appropriation of complex nostalgia, has eclipsed parody. . . . This turn to pastiche, along with the information explosion (which, as Jameson suggests, has shattered the "signifying chain" of a more focused and unified culture), signals the possibility/necessity of a new sort of art enterprise in response to multinational capitalism . . . just as . . . realism was a response to early industrial capitalism and modernism was a response to later monopoly capitalism (better known as imperialism).

Delany even senses "a deeper discursive split" in contemporary science fiction than that suggested by his two critical allies. (*Personally, whenever I hear the term "signifying chain" or* "discursive split," I contemplate the possibility/necessity of reaching for my atomic blaster.)

In the Tenn story, a far-futural academic from a thoroughly decadent society finds himself, via a time-warp, in New York City circa 1950. Tenn has sharply observed the rhetorical absurdity of the professors and makes his unlucky antihero explain himself this way to people whom he sees as his indubitable and irremediable inferiors:

> I am a flirgleflip. I flip flirgles . . . [Flirgles] were an energy form which at one time attained intelligence on Mars and left behind them only flirg-patterns which were vaguely equivalent to our music or non-objectivist art [and,] being energy forms[,] they left permanent energy records of all kinds in their only material artifacts—dolik, spindfar, and punforg.

Tenn's speaker refers "to his forthcoming paper on *Gllian Origins of Late Pegis Flirg-Patterns*," which is perhaps what Delany is talking about in his "Afterword."

My point, of course, is that contemporary science fiction, when it is not a lady's romance in spacesuits, is so much postmodern flirgleflipping, and that Tenn's prescient parody is a lot more interesting than Delany's unconscious self-parody.

Science fiction in its heyday betokened the robustness of the Western enterprise and a faith in the pioneering spirit, which, as Oswald Spengler noted, goes all the way back to the Norse voyages. It is entirely plausible to argue that science fiction provided the impetus behind the space program: the early experimenters in rocketry—Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, Robert Goddard, and (notoriously) Wernher von Braun—all read

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interplanetary fiction and dreamed of sending explorers to the Moon and Mars. It was a primary motivation.

This brings me to a third cause of the death of science fiction, perhaps not so obvious as the others. Science fiction, just like the space program which it inspired and celebrated, always had a spiritual component. Clarke put it simply in his classic essay "The Challenge of the Spaceship" (1946): "The future development of mankind, on the spiritual no less than the material plane, is bound up with the conquest of space." Possibly Clarke has the causality reversed—as a proposition, the conquest of space always presumed the continued spiritual vivacity of mankind—but the relation is no doubt recursive. Anyone who doubts that science fiction was spiritual should peruse Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930) and *Starmaker* (1937), Clarke's *Childhood's End*, or Walter M. Miller's *A Canticle for Leibowitz* (1960). In *Last and First Men*, Stapledon conceives his speculative, two billion-year future of the human race as a set of expanding variations on two themes from the Greco-Hebrew axis: "Socrates, delighting in truth for its own sake and not merely for practical ends, glorified unbiased thinking, honesty of mind and speech. Jesus, delighting in the actual human persons around him, and in that flavour of divinity which, for him, pervaded the world, stood for unselfish love of neighbours and of God." All human adventure derives from the dialectic of those two creeds. In *Starmaker*, Stapledon speculates about "the Christs of the many worlds" and concludes his exploration of the universe through space and time in a confrontation with God. *Childhood's End* also deals with the eschatological, while *A Canticle for Leibowitz* is unadulterated Thomistic theology from beginning to end. Lem, too, is a theologian in mysterious works like *Solaris* (1962) and *His Master's Voice* (1968). Even Pál's cinematic *War of the Worlds* ends, as does Wells' novel, on an invocation of the Deity.

One of the outstanding exceptions to the declining standards of the field in the late 60's and 70's was Philip K. Dick (1928-1982). Always a maverick, Dick became increasingly theological in his orientation during this period. While undertaking the role of a kind of latter-day Christian apologist in novels like *VALIS* (1981), *The Divine Invasion* (1982), and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982), Dick explicitly attacked Marxism as a pernicious—indeed inhuman—force in the history of our beleaguered century. In the posthumously published account of a mystical vision that befell him in February and March of 1974, *In Pursuit of Valis* (1991), Dick makes it clear that, at the end of his disturbed yet clairvoyant life, he saw his own work as a consistent response to the radical moral crisis of his age; humanity faced the choice, in Dick's analysis, between a humane spirituality passing from Hebrew revelation through Greek metaphysics to Gospel compassion, and an inhuman materialism whose proximate sources were (paradoxically) Karl Marx and Madison Avenue. Despite the claim that the "cyberpunk" authors make on his pedigree, Dick bestrides his shrunken world like a colossus. He was prophetic and magnanimous; they are myopic and self-absorbed. His element was the spirit; theirs the mere ego.

If, as Dick argued, science fiction stems ultimately from the theophanic and cosmic vision of the earliest Western thinkers—from the pre-Socratics, from Plato, from Epicurus—then its spiritual element is understandable. Does anyone remember today that the question of "the plurality of worlds," of the habitation of extraterrestrial planets by other humanities, first surfaced in Epicurus and was once debated by Catholic and Protestant theologians? (When Pope wrote his "Universal Prayer," he really meant it to be *universal*.) To the extent that postmodern humanity rejects the spiritual, it will reject science fiction, just as it will reject any participation in astronautics. Notice the yawning indifference that ensued after Daniel Goldin's announcement, early last August, that NASA scientists had found a Martian rock filled with microfossils.

In the immediate aftermath of World War II, science fiction represented a civilization possessed by its extrovert impulse. What Clarke called "The Challenge of the Spaceship" reflected a transcendental orientation and a boundless confidence in material means. Atomic energy, unleashed destructively at the end of the war, could be harnessed to propel men to Mars or beyond. To Clarke, in 1946, it appeared inevitable.

Once upon a time, the Vikings sailed forth into the uncharted North Atlantic; in 1961, John Kennedy enjoined NASA to put a man on the Moon, whereupon several thousand scientists and engineers, many of them readers of science fiction, accomplished just this. Then youth culture appeared, people tuned in, turned on, dropped out, and finally they went into politics or the academy. In the frog-pond of their torpor they spawned a culture turned, not healthily outward, but neurotically inward in the most debilitating and disastrous way. They have forgotten the stars; they are bereft, it seems, of grand or noble urges. Their interest lies in doliks, spindfars, and punforgs, or in their polysyllabic, postmodern equivalents. They flirgleflip.

Rest in peace, science fiction. ©

Sonnet 106

by Michelangelo

Translated by John Frederick Nims

(*Per ritornar là donde venne fora . . .*)

From heaven it ventured forth, there must return,
the immortal soul. To your flesh, its lifetime jail,
an angel of mercy it came, to countervail
our tainted thought, show fit respect for earth.

My love's on fire only for this, whose worth
is beyond your classic beauty that takes the eye.
For what else, in this spawning hubbub born to die,
can a love all truth and honor hope to yearn?

That's how with all things noble, new-created,
that nature lavished her care on, heaven too
rifled its treasures for. Thanks be, that where

in the main God shows His glory, it's radiated
veiled in some mortal form it shimmers through.
And it's such I love, for the beauty mirrored there.

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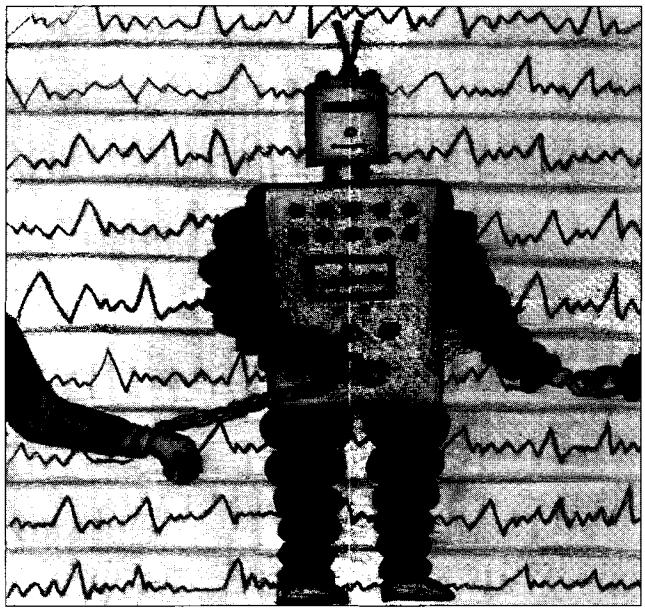
Our Phildickian World

by Jesse Walker



Stephen Anderson

Sometime during the last decade, the Philip K. Dick cult came out from underground. Those of us who spent the 1980's trying to explain our affection for this pulp writer no one else had heard of, this author of surreal science fictions and bleak realistic novels, have watched both pop culture and the academy discover and embrace his darkly comic work. Rock lyrics allude to his plots. Films—four so far: *Blade Runner*, *Total Recall*, *Confessions d'un Barjo*, and *Screamers*—are adapted from his stories. Tenured literary scholars investigate his books; in France, they gather at annual conventions. His face graces the cover of the *New Republic*, and his life and ideas are discussed (ineptly) in the *Weekly Standard*. His ghost is occasionally sighted, Elvis-style, by credulous fans. His name has become, as one friend puts it, "the ungainliest adjective in the language"—as in, "this Phildickian situation." Anyone who has read Dick will understand the expression.

Most articles about Dick in the popular press quickly launch into a list of essential titles, typically *Time Out of Joint* (1959), *Confessions of a Crap Artist* (written in 1959, published in 1975), *The Man in the High Castle* (1962), *Martian Time-Slip* (1964), *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* (1965), *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (1966/1968), *Ubik* (1969), *Flow My Tears, the Policeman Said* (1970/1974), *A Scanner Darkly* (1977), *VALIS* (1978/1981), and *The Transmigration of Timothy Archer* (1982). The writer will then add a few favorite titles of his or her own—I myself am partial to *Mary and the Giant* (1953/1987), *We Can Build You* (1962/1972), *Now Wait for Last Year* (1966), and *Galactic Pot-Healer* (1969). There is a lot to be said for this approach: Dick could produce polished prose when given a chance, but more often was forced to support himself and his families by churning out novels at a breakneck, pill-fueled, inevitably sloppy speed. It makes sense to direct beginners to his most accomplished novels, lest they be turned away by, say, the incredible widening plot holes of *The Penultimate Truth*.

Yet the importance of Dick's work ultimately lies not in any particular plots he spanned or characters he devised. Dick will be remembered for the vision that underlies his entire body of work: frightening yet funny, paranoid yet hopeful, with few barriers erected between the extraordinary and the apparently mundane. Dick wrote about the importance of maintaining one's humanity even when trapped in inhuman situations. To that end, he created remarkably human protagonists, consciously avoiding the larger-than-life heroes who had dominated science fiction's alleged Golden Age of the 1930's and 1940's. The archetypal Dick hero is a small businessman or bureaucratic functionary with a nagging wife and a nagging suspicion that the entire universe exists only in his imagination. The archetypal Dick plot will conclude with the protagonist discovering that he is wrong: the entire universe actually exists only in *someone else's* imagination. Yet he will soldier on, and tend to his failing marriage, even as the cosmos collapses around him. In *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch*, Earth faces a Satanic invasion from outer space. As the very fabric of reality is infected by an evil alien presence, the foremost thought on our hero's mind is whether he will ever reconcile with his ex-wife.

Which leads us to an important point. It is sometimes said that in Dick's worlds, nothing is as it seems, but that is not exactly true. Your neighborhood may be a Potemkin village, your girlfriend may be a police agent, and your life thus far may be an implanted memory; a lemonade stand, on closer examination, may prove to be a piece of paper bearing the words "lemonade stand," and the United States may, on closer examination, prove to be ancient Rome. But you still live in that neighborhood, and that girlfriend still loves you. The concrete bonds that people form are still real, even if none of those people are who they say they are. And the moment of divine

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Jesse Walker writes from Seattle.

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insight is still valid, even if there is no God. (In at least two of Dick's books, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* and *A Maze of Death*, religions demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt to be frauds nonetheless work miracles. And in at least two more, *The Three Stigmata of Palmer Eldritch* and *A Scanner Darkly*, men have affairs with women who turn out to be agents spying on them, but their love remains real.)

For Dick, the question then becomes whether people are able to build those bonds, with each other and with the divine, or whether they will become entirely mechanized. The key ingredient here is empathy, and in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* the characters recognize the capacity for that emotion as the dividing line between human and machine. The novel's hero, Rick Deckard, is a bounty hunter; his job is to track down and kill escaped androids. But soon he finds himself empathizing with his victims. To do his droid-exterminating job, he must become more androidlike himself.

This is a recurring moral dilemma in Dick's books: the functionary who must choose between being human or mechanically serving the state apparatus. In three of his most remarkable novels, that functionary is a police officer. In *Do Androids Dream?*, the officer is Deckard. In *Flow My Tears*, he is Felix Buckman, a police chief in a near-future totalitarian society. And in Dick's best book, *A Scanner Darkly*, he is Fred, an undercover cop searching for the source of a debilitating street drug called Substance D. When undercover, Fred is Bob Arctor, a free-spirited hippie who fits in with the people he is investigating by also using Substance D. When not undercover, Fred wears a "scramble suit," which protects his identity by making him look like a vague blur. As the novel progresses, drug-induced brain damage exacerbates the split between "Fred" and "Bob"; soon, Fred does not realize that he and Bob are the same person, and, as he watches his surveillance tapes, he begins to suspect himself of being the drug conduit. The policeman is broken into two people: Fred, authoritarian and mechanized, devoid of identity; Bob, very human but dwindling away. Dick wrote many stories about androids, but it was this novel, without a single robot in it, that most starkly portrayed the dichotomy between man and machine.

Fred lacks more than empathy. He lacks will. As he chats with a colleague after hours of watching surveillance tapes, it becomes clear how much Fred's identity is determined by his bureaucratic role:

> "I would never hang around with creeps like [Bob and his friends]," Fred said. "Saying the same things over and over, like old cons. Why do they do what they do, sitting there shooting the bull?"
>
> "Why do we do what we do? This is pretty damn monotonous, when you get down to it."
>
> "But we have to; this is our job. We have no choice."

In a 1972 speech, Dick suggested that becoming "an android, means . . . to allow oneself to become a means, or to be pounded down, manipulated, made into a means without one's knowledge or consent—the results are the same. But you cannot turn a human into an android if that human is going to break laws every chance he gets. Androidization requires obedience. And, most of all, *predictability*." For Dick, then, just as the appearance of humanity can be negated by the reality of robotic conduct, the appearance of repression can be negated by the reality of human rebellion:

> The totalitarian society envisioned by George Orwell in *1984* should have arrived by now. The electronic gadgets are here. The government is here, ready to do what Orwell anticipated. So the power exists, the motive, and the electronic hardware. But these mean nothing, because, progressively more and more so, no one is listening. The new youth that I see is too stupid to read, too restless and bored to watch, too preoccupied to remember. The collective voice of the authorities is wasted on him; he rebels. . . . He merely gets out of the way when it threatens, or, if he can't escape, fights back. When the locked police van comes to carry him off to the concentration camp, the guards will discover that while loading the van they have failed to note that another equally hopeless juvenile has slashed the tires. The van is out of commission. And while the tires are being replaced, some other youth siphons off the gas from the gas tank for his souped-up Chevrolet and has sped off long ago.

This is Dick at his most countercultural, and to some extent his least convincing. Is a young, ignorant criminal really the best symbol of humanness? He may be unpredictable, but is he empathetic? As Dick's biographer Lawrence Sutin has remarked, "the celebration of random rip-offs as the means of warding off centralized oppression may not convince readers who live in crime-ridden neighborhoods."

But Dick also had a conservative side, represented by his strong (if heterodox) religious devotion, his distrust of large bureaucratic structures, and his longtime anti-abortion stance. In the last decade of his life, as he finally began receiving substantial amounts of money for his writing, Dick donated thousands of dollars to pro-life causes. He also wrote "The Pre-Persons," a powerful story in which parents can abort any child under 12. Yet both the speech by Dick-the-hippie and the story by Dick-the-conservative are recognizably the work of the same man—both, in fact, were produced during the same period of his life. The first endorses rebellion, no matter how nihilistic, against a soulless apparatus of power; rebellion, at least, is human. And the story denies the government the right to define who is a human being, arguing that this will only produce a totalitarian system akin to the one the juvenile delinquents in the speech are rebelling against. One need not be pro-vandalism—or pro-life, for that matter—to approve of the underlying point.

Throughout his 30-year career, Dick wrote about what it means to be human in an increasingly artificial world, and about the real connections that stay firm as the state cracks down and the universe turns to *maya*. Today, long after his death, his stories seem more relevant than ever—prompting a rather Phildickian closing thought. In *Ubik*, several characters appear to survive an accident in space but are constantly confronted with messages from a man they believe has died, divine notes hidden in advertisements and scrawled on bathroom walls. Similarly, Dick has been dead for 15 years, yet his presence in the culture continues to grow unabated. In the media-saturated, paranoia-ridden world of 1997, a time of simulated men and lifelike machines, Dick's tales might be taken as a message from the deceased author, a crude couplet from *Ubik*:

> Jump In The Urinal And Stand On Your Head.
> I'm The One That's Alive. You're All Dead. ◁

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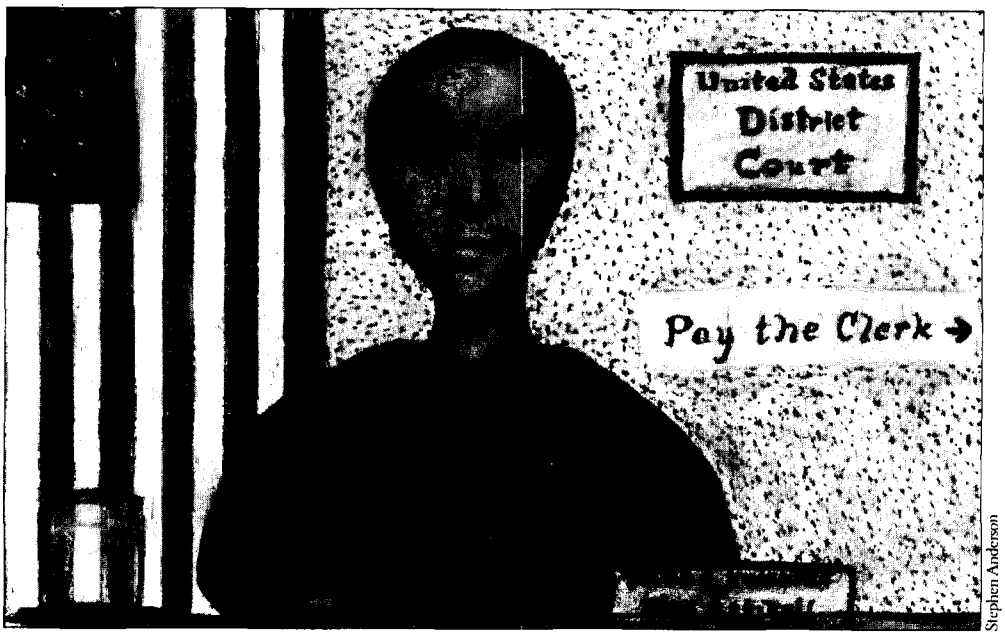
Us vs. Them

by Scott P. Richert



Stephen Anderson

They live in the town, but they have no control over it. For three years, their lives have been at the mercy of shadowy aliens who have slowly destroyed the community, forcing its citizens to work for their enrichment. Parents fear that their children will be taken from them. Some wish to resist, but they are afraid to approach others, because they can never be sure who is on their side. Many of the political and economic leaders of the town, who should lead the resistance, have turned against their fellow citizens and sided with the invaders. Those who can escape flee the town, never to return.

This is not a plot synopsis for *The X-Files*, or a concept for a new science fiction film, but a description of everyday life in Rockford, Illinois, where our lives are controlled by a federal magistrate in Freeport, Illinois, a Chicago lawyer, a Kansas City desegregation "master," and their groveling servants in the political, economic, and media power structure of this town. Here, citizens feel powerless, as their property values plummet and their hard-earned money is squandered on such "desegregation remedies" as dinners in expensive restaurants, "owl pellets," and $10,000 worth of Legos. Parents live in fear of "controlled choice," doublespeak for a court-ordered plan to yank their children out of neighborhood schools and bus them across town. And those who want to fight, but don't know how, rejoice when a Republican mayoral candidate mentions personal connections between public works employees and public contractors.

Truth often *is* stranger than fiction, and in this case, *The X-Files* has nothing on life in Rockford (though interestingly, Chris Carter, the creator of *The X-Files*, has set an episode of his new show, *Millennium*, in our town). But if these things can happen in Rockford, a city so average that it is often used by pollsters to gauge the pulse of the country, is it any wonder that *The X-Files*, with its vision of government corruption and conspiracy, is one of the most popular shows on television?

Science fiction has not always been so distrustful of government, and most people probably still associate it with the technological optimism and utopian progressivism of *Star Trek*. But it has always had its dark side. In fact, most science fiction of any enduring value never bought into the naive utopianism of *Star Trek*. The Frankenstein myth, warning of the dangers of technology and of unbridled scientific curiosity, is the most obvious example, but even the stories of a utopian progressive like H.G. Wells—*The Time Machine*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*—are notable for their dystopian view of technology and their skepticism of the innate goodness of man.

The earliest film version of Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* is still the best. *The Island of Lost Souls* (1932), featuring Charles Laughton as Dr. Moreau, captured the intensity of Wells' story, and set the stage for a generation of science fiction films with the mad scientist at their center. During and immediately after World War II, especially in the popular serials that ran before main features, the mad scientist often turned out to be a Nazi, a foreshadowing of the political undertones that have come to characterize science fiction today.

During the 1950's, the golden days of science fiction film, skepticism about technology remained an important theme, but the political undertones of the genre became more pronounced. One of the greatest science fiction films of all time is 1954's *Them!*, brilliantly (and lovingly) parodied in the 1993 film *Matinee*. Beginning in the deserts of New Mexico, *Them!* documents the battle against giant ants, mutations that resulted from atomic testing during World War II. While the main scientist in the film is dispassionate, more interested in understanding than in destruction, *Them!* serves as a warning against the unforeseen consequences of rapid technological advance.

But *Them!* also marks the beginning of the anticommunist phase in science fiction film. In the late 1980's, the conserva-

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tive establishment began parroting the ridiculous claim (first made, I believe, by Bill Buckley) that throughout the Cold War, Hollywood never made any anticommunist movies. While *Them!* can stand on the strength of its story, the ants can be seen as American communists, establishing cells (nests) in which new agents are trained (queens are hatched), to go forth and repeat the process until the entire country has been conquered.

In a more general sense, *Them!* also represents the beginning of an "Us" versus "Them" theme in science fiction. In the earlier mad scientist films, the villain, by definition, operated alone. But as the Red Scare swept the country, Hollywood played upon fears of a united communist movement, coming soon to your town and, perhaps, to your family. By the time of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956), the anticommunist allegory was so thinly veiled that even a Yalie could see through it.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers also provided a new twist on the "Us" versus "Them" theme. Nathaniel Hawthorne had placed the devil in the wilderness, and in movies like *Them!*, the threat arose from isolated areas like the New Mexico desert. With *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, made at the height of the suburban exodus in America, the devil took up residence in small towns. Throughout the movie, the hero keeps repeating the mantra, "If only we could get to the highway." To escape from the small town, where one's neighbors are no longer what they seem—that way lies salvation. As Americans moved into suburban isolation, as the real organic community structures of small towns and cities were replaced by artificial "community organizations" like Rotary, the boundaries of "Us" began to contract, first to the family and, over time, to the individual. It is no coincidence that in Ray Bradbury's masterpiece, *The Martian Chronicles*, the aliens first appear as residents of a small town. Those who have read the story, or seen the superb *Twilight Zone* adaptation, will recall the horror of the ending, when the truth is revealed.

Perhaps more than anyone else, Rod Serling explored the contracting boundaries of "Us." Serling was a small-town romantic who never really felt at home in Hollywood. Longing to return to his hometown of Binghamton, New York, but feeling that he could never go back, he transferred his love for small towns and his alienation from them to the television screen. For this reason, the *Twilight Zone* episodes focusing on small communities are among the most terrifying stories Serling ever produced.

With the waning of the Cold War, science fiction writers had to find a new "Them." Television shows like *Twin Peaks* took the fear of small-town neighbors to the extreme, while a spate of urban sci-fi/horror movies—often featuring monsters from the sewer—made it clear that the cities weren't safe either. Even the suburbs took a beating, with one theme in particular—the happy suburban family that turns out to be a band of cannibals—predominating on both television and the silver screen.

But during the 1980's, at the same time that President Reagan had supposedly restored trust in government and in big business, a growing distrust of their power—and especially of their collusion—began to creep into science fiction films. Sigourney Weaver may have had her hands full with the creatures of *Alien*, but the movie's real enemy was the military-industrial complex that wanted to study and use the aliens for its own evil purposes.

Government, in other words, had become "Them," reflecting a popular belief that our political leaders are at best out of touch with the average American, and perhaps conspiring against him. It was in this climate that *The X-Files* first appeared in 1993. The show had three strikes against it before the first episode ever aired: it was on the Fox Network; the lead actor and actress were unknown; and Chris Carter had announced that the show would feature alien encounters. Critics promptly panned it, predicting that it would not last a full season.

It is in its fourth season now, and just beginning to hit its stride. While *The X-Files* was never quite what its detractors claimed—a monster, alien, or freak-of-the-week program—it did cover a lot of traditional sci-fi ground in its first two seasons, and the aliens could be relied upon to show up at ratings time.

Almost imperceptibly, however, a change has taken place. FBI Special Agent Fox Mulder and his partner Dana Scully now encounter fewer and fewer supernatural or extraterrestrial forces, and an increasing number of human threats. Aliens have taken a back seat to government conspiracies. In fact, recent episodes have suggested that most—if not all—alien abductions are a covert operation of the federal government, perpetrated against its own citizens.

In one such episode, "Jose Chung's 'From Outer Space,'" a novelist interviews Agent Scully about alien abductions. As the story unfolds through a series of flashbacks, we are treated to the usual alien spacecraft, gray aliens with big heads and eyes, and "men in black" who show up after the encounter to intimidate witnesses. But gradually, a different picture emerges. Under hypnosis, one of the "abductees" realizes that the "aliens" that examined her were actually Air Force officers, and that her memories of the event were hypnotically replaced by—as one sinister government agent says—"the usual abduction rigamarole." As she recovers her memory, she realizes that the alien who told her "this is for the good of my planet" was really an Air Force officer saying "this is for the good of my country."

Mulder later finds an Air Force pilot wandering half-naked down a country road. The pilot tells a remarkable story of Air Force officers, dressed in rubber suits that resemble the classic gray alien, flying advanced surveillance craft. When Mulder asks him why the Air Force would go to such lengths, he explains, "The enemy sees an American recon plane, they start shooting. They see a flying saucer . . . they hesitate." What the pilot never addresses, however, is the identity of the enemy. After all, the "UFOs" are flying over *American* soil, and the "abductees" are *Americans*. When one of the "men in black" later appears to Mulder, he leaves no doubt who the government considers the enemy to be: "Some alien encounters are hoaxes perpetrated by your government to manipulate the public. Some of these hoaxes are intentionally revealed to manipulate the truth-seekers who become discredited if they disclose the deliberately absurd deception."

Similar themes run through another episode, "Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man." The man in question, whom Mulder often refers to as "Cancer Man," is the figurehead of the government conspiracy. Since the early 60's, when he was recruited by the military to assassinate JFK in the wake of the Bay of Pigs, Cancer Man has taken it upon himself to protect the United States from the threat of communism. He murdered Martin Luther King, Jr., when King urged blacks to withhold their support (and their bodies) from the war in Vietnam. James Earl Ray, like Lee Harvey Oswald, was a patsy; Cancer

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Man was the elusive "Raoul."

When Gorbachev resigns, Cancer Man thinks that his mission has been fulfilled, but that very night, an actual alien spaceship crashes in Virginia. Cancer Man reveals more about the depths of the government conspiracy when he remarks, "The timing couldn't be worse. The Roswell story we concocted was gathering momentum. Had them all looking in the wrong direction."

But this distrust of government was perhaps most evident in "Unrequited," *The X-Files* episode that aired opposite *Schindler's List* in late February. What is most remarkable about the episode is the deliberate inversion of heros and villains. During preparations for the rededication of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., high-ranking military officers are murdered by an assassin who seems to be invisible. The assassin, Nathaniel Teager, turns out to be a POW/MIA from the Vietnam War, deliberately abandoned by the U.S. government. His targets are the three military officers who served on the commission which made the false claim that no American soldiers were left alive in Vietnam. Teager was rescued from Vietnam in 1995, not by the government which had abandoned him, but by a radical paramilitary organization called "The Right Hand." When Mulder and Scully attempt to interview the group's leader, viewers expect a confrontation, but the leader goes peacefully, claiming that someday, armed resistance will be necessary, but that day has not yet arrived. (As she arrests him, Agent Scully informs him that, although he is not suspected of either violence or conspiracy, he can be held indefinitely under the provisions of the new, post-Oklahoma City antiterrorism law.) As events unfold, Mulder becomes convinced that the only person telling the truth about Teager is the leader of The Right Hand. When Teager is killed as he attempts to assassinate the final member of the commission, it is hard not to harbor the sneaking suspicion that the wrong man died.

Discussing hypnotism with Agent Scully in the "Jose Chung" episode, the novelist marvels, "as a storyteller, I'm fascinated, how a person's sense of consciousness can be so transformed by nothing more magical than listening to words, mere words." Perhaps more than any other television show, *The X-Files* has taken those words to heart. While it reflects popular suspicion of government, it has also clearly shaped it.

Why is *The X-Files* so successful? Not because of any popular fascination with aliens, but because, after Ruby Ridge, Waco, Whitewater, Vince Foster, Mena, NAFTA, and GATT, Americans have every reason to believe that their government is being run with a callous disregard for their rights and welfare and for the enrichment of an entrenched ruling class. Why did millions of Americans flock to theaters to watch *Independence Day*, one of the worst films of all times? Certainly not because Bob Dole declared it a patriotic film, or because Bill Bennett lauded its "family values" (before going into battle, one of the "heroes" marries his live-in lover, a stripper with an illegitimate child). No, they craved the vicarious thrill of seeing the White House and the Capitol blown to bits. Every newspaper or television report on the movie mentioned the crowds wildly cheering at those scenes, and only Bob Dole, who had spent almost half of his life in the Capitol and wished to make the White House his retirement home, expressed dismay.

Government's new role as "Them," however, has done little to unite "Us." The erosion of community, the destruction of bonds between generations, the rootlessness and mobility that characterize our lives today—all have served to narrow the boundaries of "Us." While most of us distrust centralized political and corporate power, we distrust our neighbors, our relatives—perhaps even our own husbands and wives—even more. *Goosebumps*, the popular children's series of sci-fi/horror books, thrives on this theme of familial distrust and paints a dark picture of where we are headed. While traditional fairy tales often cast step-parents as the evildoers, many of the *Goosebumps* stories present parents and grandparents as incompetent dupes of the evil forces threatening their children, and, occasionally, as the sources of evil themselves. When we can no longer trust even our loved ones, then "Us" becomes "Me" and "Them" becomes everyone else.

The X-Files may present a dark world where resistance is almost futile, but in the real world, there is reason to hope. Here in Rockford, the resistance is beginning to coalesce, and there are signs that the old order—too centralized, too arrogant, too corrupt, and perhaps too cowardly to do what is necessary to maintain power—is beginning to crumble. As citizens gather and reacquaint themselves with one another, "Me" once again becomes "Us," and they can begin to unite effectively against "Them." If the same thing can take place across America, then the day may come when science fiction is once again stranger than truth. ◁

Sonnet 259

by Michelangelo

Translated by John Frederick Nims

(*Ben può talor col mie 'rdente desio . . .*)

No question but, when my desire's aflame,
it soars, sometimes, its confidence no lie.
If heaven thought all our passion gone awry,
why would God make the sort of world we're in?

What worthier cause, I'd ask, to love you, then,
than to glorify that eternal peace above,
source of the heaven-born soul in you I love,
and reason enough true hearts are free of blame?

False hope attends on love that dies with dying
beauty of earth, more ashen, breath by breath;
hope brief as the pale fair face is—briefer even.

Sweet is the hope on a shamefast heart relying,
indifferent to wrinkled skin or the hour of death,
and prime executor of our deed to heaven.

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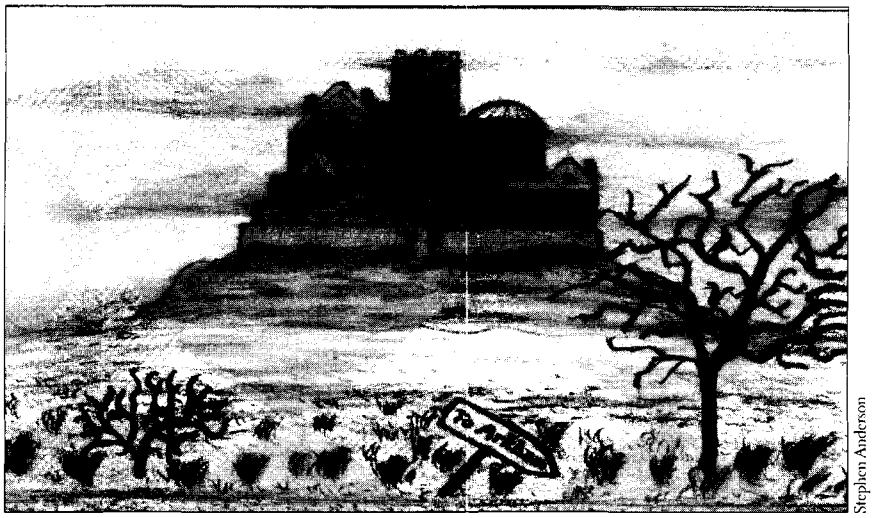
At the Heart of Darkness

by Samuel Francis

"The New Englanders are a people of God, settled in those which were once the Devil's territories."

—Cotton Mather



Stephen Anderson

H.P. Lovecraft: A Biography
by S.T. Joshi
West Warwick, Rhode Island: Necronomicon Press; 704 pp., $20.00

H.P. Lovecraft: Miscellaneous Writings
Edited by S.T. Joshi
Sauk City, Wisconsin: Arkham House; 568 pp., $29.95

◆

S.T. Joshi begins his mammoth biographical study of Howard Phillips Lovecraft by quoting his subject's reaction to a suggestion from a fan that he write his autobiography. With the almost pathological modesty that characterized Lovecraft throughout his life, he snorted in response, "One might as well write the pompously documented biography of a sandwich man or elevator boy in 8 volumes." If there is one theme that runs throughout Lovecraft's voluminous correspondence, it is that he never had any illusions that the obscure life he led was worth writing about or that the supernatural horror fiction he wrote, and on which his fame today rests, was worth reading. It is both fortunate and unfortunate that those who have succeeded in turning H.P. Lovecraft into a cult (in some quarters, almost a religion) as well as an industry have paid no attention.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island, in 1890 to a declining high-bourgeois family of New England old stock, Lovecraft lived, or rather endured, a life and writing career that can only be judged failures. His father, a traveling salesman, died in a local insane asylum from what must have been syphilis when Lovecraft was eight. His mother smothered him with possessive and crippling affection and incessantly sought to bind him to her by insisting he was "hideous." She died in the same asylum in 1921, after two years' confinement. Dependent on his grandfather's business for their income, Lovecraft and his family were obliged to leave their home during his childhood and take up far more modest quarters when the business failed. Afflicted from early youth by nightmares, macabre dreams, and a "nervous temperament," Lovecraft was unable to complete high school and entered adulthood a reclusive and even neurotic young man, utterly unprepared to earn his own living and utterly disinclined to try.

Something of a child prodigy who translated Ovid into heroic couplets at the age of 10 or 12, Lovecraft succeeded in inventing his own world as a substitute for the one in which he was unable or unwilling to participate. As a child and adolescent, he not only immersed himself in 18th-century English and ancient Roman literature and history but acquired a genuine expertise in his hobbies of astronomy and chemistry. He was writing newspaper columns on astronomy at an early age and planned a career as a professional astronomer, but his lack of mathematical aptitude and his inability to complete high school made that career impossible. Instead he turned to amateur journalism, to crafting dreadful poetry that was usually little more than clever imitations of the Augustan masters he adored, and eventually to writing short stories based on his nightmares and heavily influenced by the major literary

Samuel Francis is a nationally syndicated columnist and editor of a monthly newsletter, The Samuel Francis Letter.

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hero of his youth, Edgar Allan Poe.

In the 1920's, there emerged a small national market for the genre of popular literature known as "supernatural horror" or "weird fiction," mainly through a now-famous pulp magazine called *Weird Tales*. Lovecraft published frequently in *Weird Tales* and similar pulps in that period, and indeed the principal reason they are remembered today at all is because of him. But even there he did not fit. His stories were often rejected by *Weird Tales*'s eccentric, mercenary, and largely incompetent editor, Farnsworth Wright, and in truth Lovecraft's own highly original and distinctive tales of horror simply did not conform to the formulas on which Wright and similar editors insisted.

In 1924, Lovecraft married a woman named Sonia Greene, but in marriage too he was a failure. Unable to find a job in New York that could support both of them, he lived on her earnings as a fashion designer. He was never comfortable doing so, nor indeed in being married at all, and he insisted on divorcing her in 1929. Reduced to poverty—at times nearly to starvation—Lovecraft returned to his beloved Providence to live with an aunt, his only remaining relative, scratching out less than a livelihood by ghostwriting stories, articles, and an occasional book for other "writers." Wracked by bad health from the days of his boyhood, unable to endure cold temperatures without becoming comatose, and consuming a diet that by his own calculations cost him 30 cents a day, Lovecraft contracted both a kidney infection and intestinal cancer at the age of 46. He died in Providence in 1937. Only seven people attended his funeral, and at the time of his death probably not more than a thousand readers would have recognized his name.

And yet, had he lived for only a few more years, he would probably have become world famous and, eventually, wealthy. His work has been in print almost since his death, and in the late 1960's he began to become something of a cult figure. Not only all his stories and novelettes but five volumes of his letters as well as the substantial collection of his *Miscellaneous Writings* are in print, and the stories at least continue to sell well. A number of biographical accounts and reminiscences of Lovecraft have been published by his fans and friends; there are at least two magazines devoted to his life and work (one of them seemingly a serious literary journal), and two full-scale biographies (including Mr. Joshi's new one) have appeared.

Several films have been based on his stories, which have influenced some of the major writers of the late 20th century, including Jorge Luis Borges and Umberto Eco, and an entire school of "supernatural horror fiction" has based itself on the "Cthulhu Mythos" that he invented for his own stories. An academic conference on Lovecraft was held at Brown University on the centenary of his birth, and several monographs on him and his work have been published. Lovecraft himself has popped up as a character in several science fiction and fantasy novels, as well as in comic books; a role-playing game, based on one of his stories, has been created, and in the 1970's there was a rock band called "H.P. Lovecraft." Indeed, in 1996 some Lovecraft fans even mounted a presidential campaign for one of the principal arch-demons of his fictitious mythology, using the slogan, "Cthulhu For President: Why Vote For The Lesser Evil?"

Lovecraft has thus evolved into a myth, and much of what has been written about him is no less mythical than the monsters and macabre characters he created. The eccentricity of his personality and the even more bizarre contours of his personal philosophical and political beliefs—he was at once a militant atheist and a "mechanistic materialist" as well as an extreme reactionary and racialist, if not an outright Nazi, who ardently admired Franklin Roosevelt as well as Hitler and Mussolini—simply add to the myth; while the thousands of letters he produced during his lifetime (the published five volumes of letters are heavily edited and abridged and represent only a fraction of the total) render his life and mind difficult to assimilate, especially for an intelligentsia that sneers at both the sort of fiction he wrote and the ideas around which his mind revolved. Some critics have placed his literary work on the same level as that of Poe, while others dismiss his writing as trash. Some regard him as a serious thinker and aesthetic theorist; others, simply as a crackpot and a neurotic malcontent. He has been accepted almost literally as a god—and as the very sandwich man or elevator boy he was convinced he was.

By far the greatest merit of Mr. Joshi's biography is that it takes Lovecraft seriously—perhaps too seriously—but not as a god. While Joshi spends a good deal of time elaborating and explaining Lovecraft's philosophical views and showing their importance to his literary work, he is often quite savage in his assessment of Lovecraft's writing at its worst. At the same time, he readily hails Lovecraft's several major stories as the masterpieces of literary horror that they are and carefully avoids the temptations either to indulge in speculations about the more obscure corners of Lovecraft's life or to envelop his peculiar mind and personality in the psychobabble which detracts from the other major biography of Lovecraft by the science fiction writer L. Sprague de Camp.

Lovecraft's early stories are flawed mainly by verbosity and what critics have called "adjectivitis"—an overreliance on adjectives to describe the horrible, dreadful, frightening, gruesome, mind-chilling, etc. Moreover, throughout his tales character development is weak: indeed, there are precious few characters at all. The protagonists of his stories are usually thinly disguised doppelgangers of Lovecraft himself, scholarly bachelors of good family but dim prospects who encounter events and beings that defy natural explanation and which usually end in the horrible, dreadful, frightening, gruesome, mind-chilling death or dismemberment of the protagonist or other characters, or at least in their insanity. There are virtually no female characters, little story development (Lovecraft's plot devices often consist of diaries, letters, and various documents from which a narrative is reconstructed), less dialogue, and a good deal of heavy message between the lines as to how the cosmos is not really as nice or neat as mere mortals like to imagine.

The centerpiece of his stories, developed at various times throughout his career but intensively in the 1920's, is the aforementioned "Cthulhu Mythos," a term that refers to various fictitiously named locations in New England (Arkham, Miskatonic University), as well as to a series of supernatural or (more accurately) extraterrestrial beings known as the "Old Ones." In Lovecraft's literary cosmology, the Old Ones—with names like Cthulhu, Yog-Sothoth, Nyarlathotep, Azathoth, et cetera, loosely derived from real mythology and philology—dominated the Earth millions of years ago. Hideous in appearance (they often resemble gigantic poly-

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morphous insects compounded with reptiles and crustaceans) but possessed of vastly superhuman intelligence and powers, they are hostile to human beings and can be revived, resuscitated, or invoked through a kind of black magic known to a few and practiced by none but the degenerate (usually nonwhites). The techniques for invoking them are to be found in various ancient tomes also invented by Lovecraft, chiefly the *Necronomicon*, written in the eighth century A.D. by "the mad Arab Abdul Alhazred" and existing today in only five known copies (one of which is conveniently located in the Miskatonic University Library). But invokers of the Old Ones are generally destroyed by them, and even those who become aware of their continuing existence and the implications of their existence are usually driven mad.

The stories in which Lovecraft developed the Mythos most seriously are among his best and most mature tales, and while they continued to exhibit the peculiarities of his style in their lack of character development and plot, they are gems of setting and atmosphere, enlivened by Lovecraft's own profound knowledge of New England history, topography, architecture, and antiquities, sparingly written and genuinely effective in communicating what Lovecraft wanted to communicate. Mr. Joshi is right to insist that Lovecraft should not be faulted for avoiding character and plot since both of these would have detracted from the larger effect Lovecraft intended to create. For, as Mr. Joshi shows, in Lovecraft's stories it is neither the human characters nor their actions that are the main interest but the Lovecraftian Cosmos itself and the beings or forces that animate it.

Lovecraft's juvenile fascination with science alienated him from Christianity and drew him into a lifelong worldview that Mr. Joshi, as far as I know, is the first to recognize as a modern version of Epicureanism—a cosmology that denies the existence of anything but matter and motion and rejects the view that the universe has any purpose or goal. Lovecraft probably derived his Epicureanism from the Roman poet Lucretius, whom he may have read in Latin, but he also adapted that worldview throughout his life, trying to take account of Einsteinian physics and quantum theory as they became known in the 1920's. It was the very purposelessness of the universe that lay at the heart of Lovecraft's almost obsessive conservatism. As he wrote in an essay of 1926, reprinted in *Miscellaneous Writings*:

> The world, life, and universe we know, are only a passing cloud—yesterday in eternity it did not exist, and tomorrow its existence will be forgotten. Nothing matters—all that happens happens through the automatic and inflexible interacting of electrons, atoms, and molecules of infinity according to patterns which are co-existent with basic entity itself. . . . All is illusion, hollowness, and nothingness—but what does that matter? Illusions are all we have, so let us pretend to cling to them; they lend dramatic values and comforting sensations of purpose to things which are really valueless and purposeless. All one can logically do is to jog placidly and cynically on, according to the artificial standards and traditions with which heredity and environment have endowed him. He will get most satisfaction in the end by keeping faithful to these things.

This rather dismal creed, repeatedly developed in his essays and even more in his letters, was indeed something of a crutch for an emotional cripple, but it was also a persuasion to which Lovecraft was seriously and intellectually attached; otherwise, he would not have argued it as carefully as he did or tried to adapt it to recent scientific developments that seemed to contradict it. Given the inherent meaninglessness of life and cosmos, the only way for human beings to extract and preserve meaning is to insist on given social and cultural traditions and the political order that enforces them, and both the given culture as well as the political order are themselves dependent on the race and the ruling class that created them.

Lovecraft's racialism is a persistent problem for his admirers, and most of them spend a good deal of energy trying to hammer it into the proper psychopathological pigeonholes. The bigotries Lovecraft habitually expresses in his letters and often in his stories are supposedly merely reflections of his own wounded psyche and his personal failure to get along like a normal man. For some reason, however, no one seems compelled to attribute his atheism and materialism to any psychological flaw, and Mr. Joshi is refreshingly free of this sort of cant, though he is careful to make it clear that he finds Lovecraft's racial views "the one true black mark on his character."

Lovecraft's racial opinions were indeed strong even for the decade that saw publication of Madison Grant's and Lothrop Stoddard's work. During his life in New York, he wrote to a friend about a walk he and his wife took in the Bronx: "Upon my most solemn oath, I'll be shot if three out of every four persons—nay, full nine out of every ten—wern't [sic] flabby, pungent, grinning, chattering n--gers." Similarly, six years later he remarked, "The population [of New York City] is a mongrel herd with repulsive Mongoloid Jews in the visible majority, and the coarse faces and bad manners eventually come to wear on one so unbearably that one feels like punching every g-- d--- bastard in sight." These are only two more printable expressions of his views that are commonplace in his letters. It must be said, however, that there is no known occasion on which Lovecraft offered insult or injury to those whom he despised; indeed, both his wife Sonia Greene and several of his closer friends were Jewish. Decades after his death, Sonia tried to claim that his anti-Semitism was a major reason for her leaving him, but the fact is that Lovecraft insisted on the divorce, against her wishes. All accounts agree that Lovecraft was a charming, highly courteous, and kindly man, a brilliant conversationalist and companion, with an agile and erudite intelligence. His admiration for Hitler seems to have ceased after he learned of Nazi physical attacks on Jews.

Although Mr. Joshi tries to argue that Lovecraft's racialism was largely irrelevant to his writing, that is not quite true. He is entirely correct in seeing that what he calls Lovecraft's "cosmicism—the depicting of the boundless gulfs of space and time and the risible insignificance of humanity within them"—is the core of his philosophical thought as well as his literary work, and he claims that "This is something Lovecraft expressed more powerfully than any writer before or since" (that may not be true either; there seems to be a strong parallel between Lovecraft's cosmology and that of Joseph Conrad). Indeed, Lovecraft's "cosmicism" is the real horror of his stories—not the grotesque appearance of the Old Ones and not the gruesome fate

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of those who have truck with them, but rather the discovery by the scholarly bachelors who recount the tales that the universe has no meaning at all, that all the conventions and ideas and values on which their lives and those of mankind rest are but shadows in the ceaseless play of impersonal if not actually hostile cosmic forces. As Mr. Joshi summarizes "Lovecraft's vision": "Humanity is *not* at centre stage in the cosmos, and there is no one to help us against the entities who have from time to time descended upon the earth and wreaked havoc; indeed, the 'gods' of the Mythos are not really gods at all, but merely extraterrestrials who occasionally manipulate their human followers for their own advantage."

Mr. Joshi is correct about the cosmic level of meaning in Lovecraft's stories, but he largely neglects another, social level of meaning. On that level, Lovecraft's stories are dramas of modernity in which the forces of tradition and order in society and in the universe are confronted by modernity itself—in the form of the shapeless beings known (ironically) as the "Old Ones." In fact, they are the "New Ones." Their appearance to earthly beings is often attended by allusions to "Einsteinian physics," "Freudian psychology," "non-Euclidean algebra" (a meaningless but suggestive term), modern art, and the writing of T.S. Eliot and James Joyce. The conflicts in the stories are typically between some representative of traditional order (the New England old stock protagonist) on the one hand, and the "hordes" of Mongoloids, Levantines, Negroes, Caribbeans, and Asians that gibber and prance in worship of the Old Ones and invoke their dark, destructive, and invincible powers.

What Lovecraft does in his stories, then, is not only to develop the logic of his "cosmicism" by exposing the futility of human conventions, but to document the triumph of a formless and monstrous modernity against the civilization to which Lovecraft himself—if almost no one else in his time—was faithful. In the course of his brief existence, he saw the traditions of his class and his people vanishing before his eyes, and with them the civilization they had created, and no one seemed to care or even grasp the nature of the forces that were destroying it. The measures conventionally invoked to preserve it—traditional Christianity, traditional art forms, conventional ethics and political theory—were useless against the ineluctable cosmic sweep of the Old Ones and the new anarchic powers they symbolized.

Lovecraft believed that his order could not be saved, and that in the long run it didn't matter anyway, so he jogged placidly and cynically on, one of America's last free men, living his life as he wanted to live it and as he believed a New England gentleman should live it: thinking what he wanted to think, and writing what he wanted to write, without concern for conventional opinions, worldly success, or immortality. And yet, despite the indifference he affected, Howard Phillips Lovecraft has in the end attained a kind of immortality, for the classic tales of horror he created will be read as long as that genre of literature is read at all. And since man's horror of the alien cosmos into which he has been thrown is perhaps the oldest theme of art, that may be for a very long time to come. ◁

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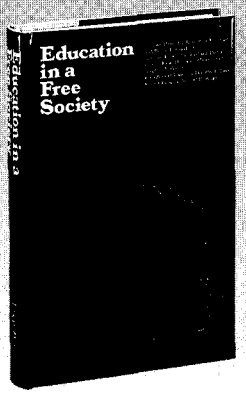
EDUCATION IN A FREE SOCIETY

Edited by Anne Husted Burleigh

"Education in a Free Society should be of value to all those concerned with restoring freedom to the most important nonfree institution in our society."

—The Freeman



Scarcely anyone is happy with public education in the United States today. Yet, if it were possible to start afresh with a system of any choosing, what sort of educational arrangements would recommend themselves—and what kind of educational institution should parents, educators, and public officials alike choose? To consider these questions, Liberty Fund—a private operating educational foundation—presents the papers of four distinquished scholars, Gottfried Dietze, Russell Kirk, Henry Manne, and Stephen Tonsor, each of whom responded to a position paper, "Education in a Free Society," by Pierre F. Goodrich and Benjamin A. Rogge. Dorothy L. Sayers's splendid essay, "The Lost Tools of Learning," also is included in the collection, and served as the basis of recommendations for both primary and secondary schooling. As Anne Husted Burleigh writes in her introduction, the contributors "chose to erect as their ideal educational system strictly private institutions operating in the framework of a state whose only interference would be to monopolize force for the protection of the rights of individual citizens." In sum, if education is to be renewed in American life, the renewal must come from private and voluntary institutions.

272 pages. Introduction, biographies of the authors, index.

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Getting to Know the General

by Wayne Allensworth

Za Derzhavu Obidno . . .
(It's a Pity for a Great Power . . .)
by Aleksandr Lebed
Moscow: Moskovskaya Pravda;
464 pp.

◆

The rise to political prominence of former Airborne Forces General Aleksandr Lebed, and especially his emphasis on law and order as the only real basis for proceeding with reforms, has raised the specter in the Russian mind of the proverbial Man on a White Horse, the military savior whose iron-fisted rule puts the national house in order. The image is not alien to post-Soviet Russians, many of whom well remember the charge of "Bonapartism" made by Nikita Khrushchev against the popular World War II hero Marshal Zhukov. By refusing to support the August 1991 coup, however, the Soviet military effectively hastened the collapse of the communist regime (Lebed is partly credited with keeping the Airborne Forces out of the political fracas), and Yeltsin's use of regular army troops to suppress the Supreme Soviet in October 1993 highlighted the crucial importance of military support for any prospective Russian leadership.

During the reformist era (beginning with Gorbachev and continuing today), the role of the military has been hotly debated. Military officers, civilian experts, and politicians have argued over the merits of an all-volunteer army, the structure and mission of the Russian military in the post-Cold War period, and military doctrine and strategy. The catalyst for much of this debate was the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, which exposed the demoralized state of the army and the military's lack of preparedness for unconventional warfare. The army command system was judged too rigid: innovation and initiative were stifled, and political ideology had often overridden common sense. The harsh and often brutal treatment of conscripts, the high peacetime casualty rates, the low pay and primitive housing conditions, and the corruption of the officer corps and the Soviet *nomenklatura* system became common themes in Soviet and Russian public discourse. Russian officers began to lobby for higher pay (or even to be paid at all), better living conditions, and much-needed reforms. "Committees of Soldiers' Mothers" demanded that the state protect enlisted men from the brutal, sometimes fatal, hazing known as the *dedovshina*. Politicized organizations of Afghan veterans and ex-officers became commonplace. By the beginning of the postcommunist era, military participation in public life was a fact.

Having had no experience of warfare on our native soil in more than a century, Americans easily overlook or underestimate the symbolic importance of the military in Russian life. The special aura of the army and the mystical attachment between the Russian and his Fatherland was etched deeply in the popular imagination by the experience of the war against fascism. Millions died in the inferno of the Russian front; the legendary defense of Stalingrad and the march to Berlin strengthened the national bond as no other experience could. At home every man, woman, and child was mobilized, tightening the ties of blood and soil in the crucible of total war. Whatever legitimacy the communist regime would enjoy among the Russians thereafter was based largely on the sense of patriotism and nationalist fervor that the Great Patriotic War generated. Westerners may have been puzzled by Boris Yeltsin's decision to unfurl the red banners of the victorious Soviet army during the victory day celebration in 1996, but like his predecessors in the Kremlin he recognized the importance of the banners that so many had fought under. As Yeltsin had told them before, the wartime victory had not been communism's, and surely not the *nomenklatura's*, but the people's. Russia's army is a people's army. What institution could be more likely to raise up a man of the people?

A better man of the people than Aleksandr Ivanovich Lebed, born into a worker's family in 1950 in the Russian city of Novocherkassk, would be difficult to imagine. Tall, big-boned, and equipped with a booming bass voice, this Afghan war veteran and former heavyweight boxer (as his memoirs testify, he is not a man averse to using his fists as a management tool on occasion) is an uncommon common man whose awareness of the corruption surrounding him has been increasing throughout his adult life.

Both Lebed's grandfather, who lived in internal exile for a number of years, and his father, who survived the Gulag only to fight in a penal battalion (considered a death sentence in itself) for the duration of the Great Patriotic War, suffered under the communists. As a boy, he witnessed the suppression of a worker's protest in his native Novocherkassk; today he promises that, as president, he would never use the Russian army against the people, and calls the October 1993 bombardment of the Supreme Soviet "Russia's shame." In Afghanistan, where he commanded a battalion in 1981-82 and won the Order of the Red Star for bravery (an honor he does not mention in his book), he saw lives wasted in what he considered to be a fruitless and unwinnable war. But what did the Brezhnevite *nomenklatura* care? It was not their sons who would serve there, but "the sons of workers and peasants," and the Soviet High Command forgot that the first concern of the officer must be "to return to all mothers all their sons."

His opposition to the Chechen war (which made him very popular both with civilians and with many servicemen) was based first and foremost on his view that "such a war simply cannot be won." Lebed was not surprised that the politicians—*nomenklatura* holdovers for the most part—had failed to see, as he recently told the *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, that the brutal application of heavy firepower there had "destroyed the homes of a large number of people with impunity, killed their relatives and friends, and maimed their children." No wonder the Chechen resistance was so fierce, says Lebed; "you would have grabbed an assault rifle too, wouldn't you?"

As Lebed sees it, the task of postcommunist Russian patriots is to build a Russian nation-state—the day of the empire

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is over in his view—that would protect the freedom and dignity of all Russians, that would end forever the rule of corrupt elites who have exploited the people, and that would nurture what talents the people themselves possess to build something for themselves and their posterity. Lebed calls his vision for Russia *derzhavnost*, literally "great powerness," but his notion of what makes a great power great is markedly different from that of "red-brown" nationalists who long for the days of superpower status. Lebed has described *derzhavnost* in these words: "There is the citizen, a person who has on the territory of his country a family, children, a home. . . . [H]e has something to defend, something to fight for, and, if necessary, to die for. The vagrant is not given to understanding what the homeland is. . . . In wartime he disappears. . . . A man must stand on his own land, he must have something of his own." Only men who are masters of their own land can build *derzhava*, a truly great Russian state.

According to the general, the army should be reorganized and designed for defensive operations, and Lebed pledges that, as president, he would never commit Russia to "holy alliances" and "world revolutions" paid for by "Russian blood . . . Russian money and Russian suffering." Police and security forces should, under the command of the strong presidential system he wants to preserve, conduct an all-out war on the organized crime structures that are such a prominent feature of present-day Russia. The freedom and dignity that *derzhavnost* promises, and the self-respect that Lebed hopes Russians will come to feel, can be realized only after basic order has been established. In the end, the new Russia will be established for the good of the people, for throughout the country's long and painful history, "Czars, General Secretaries [of the Communist Party], and presidents come and go, but the people remain." For Lebed, only the people are "eternal."

Since the 19th century, when both conservative Slavophiles and liberal Westernizers "went to the people" to find an uncorrupted social stratum to use as a basis for their differing versions of reform, populism in various forms has played an important role in the politics of the country. It is not surprising, then, that the perennial populist message, used to great effect by the Bolshevik revolutionaries, has become a vehicle for the activities of various politicians in postcommunist Russia. Unlike the 19th-century intellectuals, however, today's politicians go to great lengths to depict themselves as men of the people, and not merely as elite reformers.

In his autobiography *Against the Grain*, Boris Yeltsin presented himself as a champion of the people whom the corrupt *nomenklatura* turned into a "political pariah." Yeltsin described his struggle as one against "the party bureaucracy" that was attempting "to put obstacles in the way of *perestroika* and *glasnost*." Yeltsin, however, "drew new energy" from his contacts with ordinary citizens and saw his political career as dedicated to ensuring that "we will never again live as we did before." Yeltsin's efforts to meet ordinary people on their own ground—taking public transportation to work during his days as Moscow party boss, for instance—won him a reservoir of good will among the mass of Russians that has served him well.

Yeltsin's version of populism, however, has not been the only one promoted by Russian politicians. Vladimir Zhirinovsky has been quite successful in promulgating a populist line that is rawer and more visceral than Yeltsin's. Zhirinovsky once told Russian voters that "For years you have been deceived, made fools of, and stuffed full of various dogmas" and that only he, who had suffered as they had, could set things right. Zhirinovsky's populism plays on envy and self-pity—and, like Yeltsin's, has made him friends among the Russian people.

Lebed's populism is different from either Yeltsin's or Zhirinovsky's, though many Russians think that the general's outsider status makes him Yeltsin's legitimate heir. In his memoirs, Lebed envisions the future Russia as one of "free people [living in] a free land . . . without slavery in our blood" or "fear in our genes." His unique blend of populist, democratic, nationalist, and traditionalist themes forms a coherent worldview, unlike Yeltsin's, but one that does not capitalize on the resentment, or indulge in either the self-pity or self-glorification, that mark Zhirinovsky's. So far, Lebed has been able to maintain his image as the honest and incorruptible "Mr. Clean" of Russian politics. Whether or not he will remain true to himself and his notions of *derzhavnost* is an open question, and what becomes of him will depend as much on the Russian people—and how they see themselves—as it does on Lebed himself.

Wayne Allensworth writes from Purcellville, Virginia.

Sonnet 274

by Michelangelo

Translated by John Frederick Nims

(*Deh fammiti vedere in ogni loco!*)

Oh let me see You everywhere I go!
If mortal beauty sets the soul afire,
Your dazzle will show how dim it is; desire
for You burns high, as once in heaven's own air.
It's You alone, my dearest Lord, my prayer
appeals to against passion's futile anguish;
Only You can give me vision to distinguish
what I should think, wish, do, though slack and slow.
You tethered me to time, no road-to-bliss way,
sentenced, though stooped and faint, to endless ranging,
shackled in heavy flesh, remissions few.
What can I do to escape from living this way?
Your power divine is my one chance of changing.
I've nothing to fall back on, Lord, but You.

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Red Is Beautiful

by Michael Washburn

The Indebted Society
by James Medoff and Andrew Harless
Boston: Little, Brown;
241 pp., $24.95

◆

According to Harvard professor James Medoff and financial analyst Andrew Harless, one of the most baleful influences on America's economic health—and a reason for the declining standard of living of both blue- and white-collar workers—is the money-lending sector, which includes many commercial and investment banks and individual investors. In the authors' view, the lenders have for the past few decades pursued interests radically different from those of most Americans, with the connivance of a Federal Reserve System run by men who are themselves former investors and bankers. While it is well known that private firms have had an exploitative and impersonal relationship with their workers, few people understand how the lenders exploit the exploiters and make things even worse for the workers at the bottom of the hierarchy.

For many people, corporate debt is a more distant problem than personal debt, which has spiraled to ever greater heights as revolving credit has become a norm of American life. The emergence of a class of people living in perpetual debt is not at all a bad thing for bankers who oversee the use of credit cards. Fully aware of the profits to be made off customers who do not pay the full balance due each month, bankers now offer credit cards to those who in past years would have been considered unacceptable risks. The upshot today is that 90 percent of credit card revenue stems directly from use of the revolving-credit policy. Encouraging this trend has been the change in the federal funds rate which in the 12 years up to 1992 fell from 13.4 percent to 3.5, while the average credit card interest rate rose from 17.3 percent to 17.8. Banks are now able to borrow money at a low rate and relend it at a very high rate.

While there is a high rate of default among those who never should have been issued credit cards in the first place, the losses pale in comparison with the profits made off those in debt. Accustomed to a certain standard of living, many Americans refuse to change their spending habits even if interest rates go up. What the authors call "upwardly mobile interest rates" have resulted in a 900 percent jump in receivables for the credit card industry between 1983 and 1993.

Paralleling the rise of personal debt is the growth of corporate debt, whose effects may not be as visible to the average worker—until he gets his pink slip. As Medoff and Harless put it, "American capitalism has taken on a new look. At one time, it was a system based on owning. It is now a system based on owing." In 1958, when debt was at a higher level than in any other year of the 1950's, only 4.6 percent of the cash flow came from interest payments (excluding firms in the business of borrowing and lending money). In 1985, the figure had already gone up to 15.9 percent—in what was the lowest-debt year of the 1980's. In some sectors of the economy, the figure is much higher—in manufacturing, for example, it had climbed to 36 percent by 1992. Contributing to the rise in corporate debt are tax-deductible interest payments and leveraged buyouts of financially unhealthy conglomerates. Another reason is the dwindling number of top executives who were alive during the Great Depression, when massive debt was usually a sign of certain financial doom. Younger executives have fewer qualms about owing large sums of money.

Whatever the reason for a company's slide into debt, the upshot is almost always the same—efforts to "downsize" and cut costs by dumping workers and relying on temporary help. Job security is a thing of the past, as is the notion that hard work will lead to a promotion or higher wages. Hourly earnings have fallen steadily in both the service and manufacturing sectors since 1973, and health insurance and pensions are harder and harder to come by. For young blue-collar workers, things are particularly bad, with the goods-producing sector experiencing the biggest decline in real wages. Things aren't much better for white-collar workers. In fact, a 1994 Bureau of Labor report found that the biggest jump in the number of "displaced" workers was among "managers and professionals and technical, sales, and administrative support workers." The victims are largely middle-aged white men. Women are insulated by their relatively lower wages and, one suspects, by affirmative action, though the authors do not discuss this.

In our time, Medoff and Harless write, "the needs of lenders have acquired an almost sacrosanct status." While the Federal Reserve System does much of its business in secrecy—until 1994, it did not even announce its decisions until months after they were made—it does not enjoy the immunity to partisanship that one might imagine. In the authors' view, the Federal Reserve System is in thrall to the lenders, which is not surprising in view of the backgrounds of many top officials at the Fed—former bankers and investors who may hope someday to reenter the lending sector. "A high inflation rate, even if only temporary," write Medoff and Harless, "looks particularly bad on the resume of a former Fed governor, especially if he or she is looking for a job in private-sector banking." It is therefore in their personal interest to keep interest rates and the value of the dollar high.

When appointing a top Fed official, the President often tries to placate the lending class, for if he does not, the appointment may be derailed. Former Vice Chairman Alan Blinder, a Clinton appointee, learned the price of questioning pro-lender policies when many "anonymous sources" within the Fed vilified him so savagely that he left his post shortly after taking it. When Clinton appointed Felix Rohatyn to succeed Blinder, a campaign to derail his appointment was begun by Florida senator Connie Mack. Which isn't surprising—for percentage of total income represented by direct interest income, Florida ranks third out of all 50 states.

The erosion of living standards can be reversed, but not while the Fed keeps its status as a semisecret body immune to democratic pressures but wielding enormous power (a power recognized by Richard Nixon, who put heavy pressures on his appointee Arthur Burns to keep interest rates down and thus insure plentiful jobs, which would reflect well on Nixon when election day rolled around). The entire subculture of the Fed needs to change, so that the interests of lenders will no longer be the sole concern. Fed officials could receive bonuses for helping to keep employment up, and lenders could be issued inflation-adjusted bonds. But past efforts at reform have faced fierce opposition from a powerful financial elite which milks the middle

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and working classes and bankrolls our candidates for high office.

Michael Washburn is the assistant editor of Chronicles.

The Straussian Sidestep

by Marco Respinti

Leo Strauss e la destra americana
by Germana Paraboschi
Rome: Editori Riuniti;
162 pp.

◆

Dr. Germana Paraboschi's *Leo Strauss e la destra americana* (*Leo Strauss and the American Right*) is one of the few serious studies of the American right to come out of Italy. Dr. Paraboschi is a young scholar, born in Milan in 1961 and now living just outside Pavia. She spent several years in the United States, studying American conservatism. But curiously enough, her book was published by Roman Editori Riuniti, the publishing house of the Democratic Party of the Left, born from the ashes of the Italian Communist Party (an example of how leftists are light-years ahead in the cultural war, and in studying the enemy).

After surveying the movements that made up the postwar American right, Paraboschi ponders the work of Leo Strauss and the debate between the different Straussian schools. She reconsiders the Burkean school within the Old Right and sets the thought of Paul Gottfried and Claes Ryn—two scholars who decisively support transcendent values and thus escape the relativism popular in European historiography—as the main alternative to Strauss and the Straussians. To her, Gottfried and Ryn are correct in stressing the importance of principles to a sound and self-conscious philosophy of conservative thought. They realize that historical consciousness must be grounded on values, of which history itself is the vassal.

Paraboschi also analyzes Strauss's defense of objective values and Natural Law. As she explains it, the Straussians abstractly approach Natural Law as if it were a Shakespearean *persona* to advance one's own agenda; they try to lend legitimacy to their arguments before traditional and conservative audiences with frequent references to antiquity. But actually, there is nothing ancient or traditional (in the Latin sense of *tradere*, to hand something down) in their arguments, which defend objective values out of their context and historical dimension. The Enlightenment and the French Revolution did the same thing, considering values and virtue (public virtue to be advanced forcibly by the Leviathan state, the only source of right and wrong) in an abstract way.

Guido Alpa, in the introduction to the new Italian edition of Strauss's *Natural Right and History*, states that when the first Italian version of this book was published in 1957, liberals and secularized Italians rose up against it, since Natural Law was considered a heritage of classical thought, commonly judged "reactionary" and defended only by Roman Catholics. Alpa gives this as the reason why Strauss is not appreciated in Italy, a country surrounded and polluted with a progressive, liberal, and radical culture.

On balance, I consider it absurd to attack and undermine Natural Law theory by using history in this abstract way. The founding of America, for example, showed first principles embodied in a particular time and place. But if we consider the self-evident truths and the language of the Declaration of Independence both as a supreme revelation of a historical reality, and as the sole light by which to view the whole American experience, we fall into the mistake of not considering what actually happened (the concrete reality of history), and to give to words and facts a presumptive meaning out of context. This is the way liberal European scholars normally interpret the American Revolution—i.e., as a subversive, progressive, even radical invention announcing the new age of ideology and the arrival of the Leviathan state. The French Revolution *was* such an invention, but not the American one; nor was the American Revolution the willing parent to the French Revolution.

Separating itself from abstract Natural Law theory, from idealism, and from relativistic historicism, true conservative thought has to defend the alliance of historical consciousness with supreme objective values. As Russell Kirk said, "History . . . is the gradual revelation of a supreme design—often shadowy to our blinking eyes, but subtle, resistless, and beneficent. God makes history through the agency of man."

The work of Paul Gottfried and Claes Ryn's National Humanities Institute—aimed at defining and defending "value-centered historicism"—is the philosophical good battle being fought today. It is also the important premise for establishing a sound philosophy of history connected to what medieval scholasticism called *quaestio de veritate* (the question of Truth). Here is a true counterrevolutionary and conservative philosophy.

Marco Respinti is the editor of a forthcoming series of books in Italy on Anglo-American conservative thought.

Bookman's Holiday

by Gregory McNamee

A History of Reading
by Alberto Manguel
New York: Viking;
372 pp., $26.95

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Saint Ambrose, the reputed author of the Athanasian Creed, did not move his lips when he read. Neither did Ambrose's pupil and colleague Saint Augustine. The Roman chroniclers who witnessed this feat thought it only a curiosity, and the provincial missionaries' example took generations to become the ruling style of reading in the West.

Regardless of how it is done, reading is a social act, involving a history of formal and informal accords establishing that written words have certain meanings and shapes, that they are to be used in certain ways. Reading is also, of course, an intensely individual act: each reader approaches a text differently, bringing to bear experience and personality on another's words. It is a complex mental activity, involving several areas of the brain at once. Reading is physiologically complex as well, demanding that the eyes dart around the page hundreds of times each second to take in bits and pieces of visual information.

All of these matters are of profound interest to Alberto Manguel, a multilingual Argentine now living in Canada,

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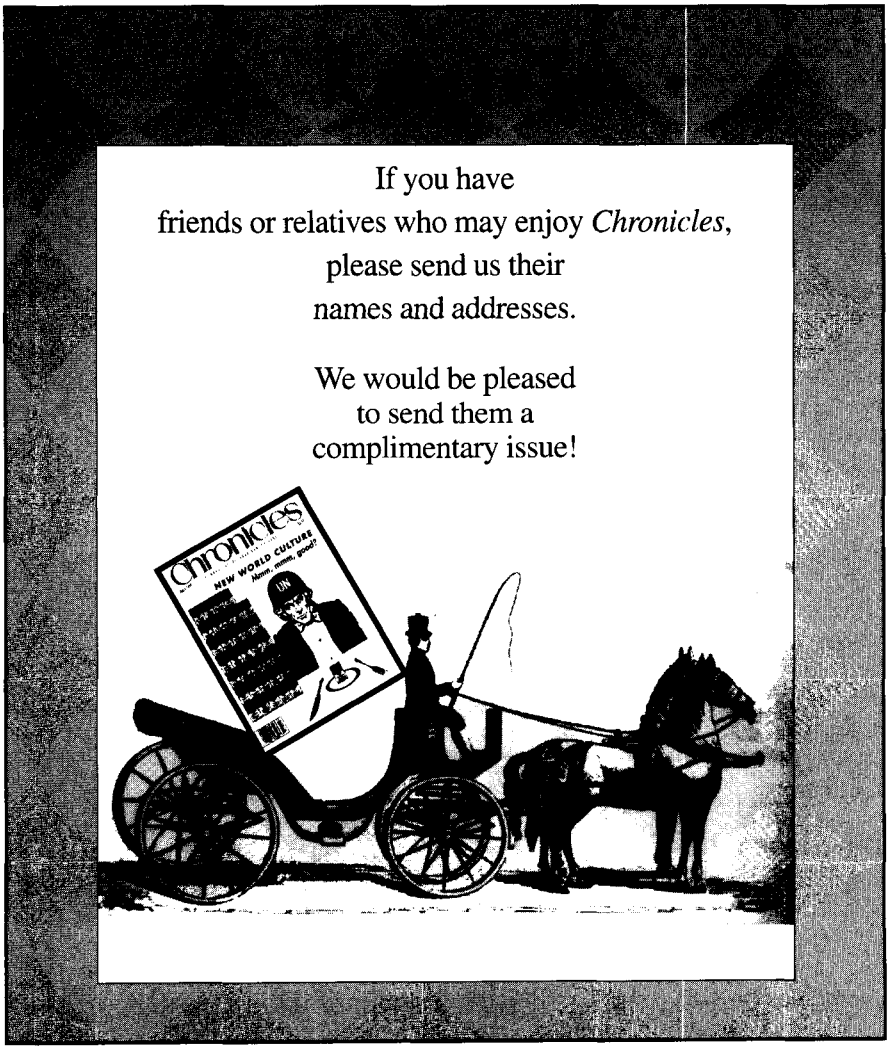
who ranges comfortably along the thousands of years that make up the history of literacy to spin a narrative that runs from cave paintings to CD-ROM, from ancient Chinese "bone-shell scripts" carved on turtle carapaces to technologies not yet in place. His *History of Reading* spans vast territories of the mind, dropping names and tantalizing arcana, pausing to ponder, in the space of a few paragraphs, the multiple layers of meaning of a medieval illuminated Bible, the *double entendres* of an advertisement for vodka, and the iconography of Eleanor of Aquitaine's tomb (completed in 1204) which, fittingly enough, depicts her reclining in bed to read a book propped on her stomach.

Manguel's cosmic history of reading as social fact is also a personal one, an affecting memoir of a lifetime surrounded by books, the typical retreat of the lonely child. Less solitary in adulthood, Manguel has had the good fortune of enjoying bookish companions, notably the fellow Argentine writer and consummate reader Jorge Luis Borges, to whom Manguel read after Borges became blind in old age. The infirmity did not, Manguel writes, slow Borges down in the least; "the listener . . . became the master of the text," pausing for reflection, repeating words and phrases, and calling for other books to illuminate the first.

Democratically minded, Manguel joins this story to a portrait of Cuban cigar rollers who appoint one of their number to read them a story as they work, a long-standing favorite being Alexandre Dumas's *Count of Monte Cristo* whose name honors a cigar of exceptional quality. Presumably these workers are happier and better adjusted than are their Muzak-fed counterparts, for elsewhere Manguel examines favorably psychologist James Hillman's notion that readers of stories, especially those used to reading early in life, have better psychic armor and a better-developed sense of the world than those who are introduced to stories late or not at all.



Manguel darts about from century to century and topic to topic, from the contents of Lady Murasaki's pillow box to famous forgers of the Napoleonic era. But he returns often to several themes, foremost the idea that knowledge—bookish knowledge—*is* a form of power. Recalling his homeland, Manguel notes that it is for this very reason that most governments do not go out of their way to educate their citizens to be close, critical readers. "Demotic regimes demand that we forget," he writes, "and therefore they brand books as superfluous luxuries; totalitarian regimes demand that we not think, and therefore they encourage the consumption of pap." One has only to consider the current best-seller lists to recognize that Manguel's point applies to the United States, as well as to Argentina.

Political power is ever present in Manguel's discussion: he notes that ancient Alexandria owed its great library to the requirement that the ships passing through its port surrender any books on board, to be copied; considers the laws of ancient Rome—and of the antebellum American South—forbidding slaves to read or be taught to read; and notes that the Pinochet government, years after it came to power, banned *Don Quixote* from Chile in 1981 for the reason that this most bookish of novels sets the good of individuals over that of the state. Sometimes Manguel's examples are captivating, as with an anecdote about the Grand Vizier of Persia, Abdel Kassem Ismael, who ordered that his library of 117,000 volumes accompany him while traveling, borne by a caravan of 400 camels, arranged in alphabetical order. Others are horrifying, like his account of the life of the martyr William Tyndale, a printer who at the order of Henry VIII in 1536 was strangled and burned at the stake (ostensibly for the heresy of printing a new translation of the Bible, but in fact for having criticized the king for divorcing Catherine of Aragon).

"Reading, almost as much as breathing, is our essential function," Manguel ventures. Dispelling the claim that reading is a dying art in a time when the mass production of books continues to rise, his own rich book honors the magic of literacy. Every bibliophile will find much of worth in its pages.

Gregory McNamee's most recent book is A Desert Bestiary, *published by Johnson Books in Boulder, Colorado.*

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Letter From Boston

by Eugene Narrett

The Return of Katherine Ann Power

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Last fall, an editor at my suburban Boston daily urged readers to reflect on "a personal essay, lyrical but not flowery," by one of our "neighbors" at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute in Framingham, the state penitentiary for women. "The least we can do," he wrote, "is put our ears against the tall brick walls" and let Kathy Power tell us about her "community." This might seem a modest and charitable request, if the name Katherine Ann Power didn't ring a bell. But once the history that led her to MCI is revisited, you may decide you know more than enough about "Kathy" without needing to absorb her latest exercise in self-pity.

On September 23, 1970, there was an armed robbery at the State Street Bank on Western Avenue in the Brighton section of Boston. Two men and one woman burst in, shouted "we mean business," and fired into the walls. It was politically motivated violence: the stolen cash was to finance attacks on "the state," and somehow impede the war in Vietnam.

The armed robbers were Susan Saxe, William Gilday, and Stanley Bond. The last two were high school dropouts and ex-cons, attending Brandeis University as "special students," under an early type of affirmative action. They stored their weapons and stolen ammo in the apartment of fellow student Katherine Power, a rich girl from Denver, who shared their political and criminal agenda.

When the three robbers emerged onto Western Avenue, officer Walter Schroeder, a father of ten, had responded to a call and was waiting behind his patrol car. With a burst of machine-gun fire, Gilday shot and mortally wounded Schroeder, who died a few hours later. A mile from the bank, the criminals hopped into the "switch" car driven by Power. Soon afterward, Gilday, Bond, and Saxe were caught; Power vanished. In 1984, assuming she was dead or out of the country, the FBI removed her from its Most Wanted List. A little more than three years ago, she reappeared in Boston and became a celebrity.

Having negotiated surrender to the FBI via several big-shot lawyers, Power is serving 8 to 12 years for manslaughter, but she still sees herself as victim and heroine in an epic of youthful idealism. "I seem to be a carrier for a lot of people's stuff," she writes, adroitly using New Age idiom to shift responsibility for her imprisonment onto the presumed emotional needs of other people.

It is hard to blame Power completely for her confused self-image. She has had and still has noisy cheerleaders. The political climate in the Boston area has been so disordered for so long that when Power surrendered, the media, and some public officials, exalted her. A lawyer called her "an icon for public morality," and a district attorney praised her ethics. A reporter who interviewed her in 1994 wrote that Power's life as a fugitive "exemplified charity, nonviolence, and social activism."

What had Power done to earn this Christ-like accolade? After her accomplices killed Officer Schroeder, she disappeared into an underground of feminist safe-houses and speculum parties. To disguise her identity, she took the name of an infant, Alice Metzinger, who had died in 1948, the year Power was born. During her shrewd getaway, Power conned the government for small business loans, cooked gourmet health food, and ran a chain of restaurants. She wore Birkenstock sandals (when she surrendered, the media highlighted this fact), sorted through sex partners, and had an illegitimate child (she remains unsure of the child's paternity). She was very "right on." The fact that she cooked polenta was itself nearly enough to acquit her in the *Boston Globe*. Those who celebrated her hardly noticed that her "charity" did not include service to Walter Schroeder's widow, Marie, or to the ten fatherless children. But then, like Daniel Faulkner, the police officer shot to death by Mumia Abu-Jamal in Philadelphia, Walter Schroeder was a white man whose death scarcely registers with promoters of "social justice."

While left-wing reportage swooned over Power's "nonhierarchical anarchist values," a few who worked for her out West offered a different portrait. One remembered her as "a strong presence in the kitchen, not known for tolerating mistakes. She'd yell at you in a voice you could hear through a closed door." Another acquaintance recalled that Power had instructed her young son not to ask about extended family. "Doesn't he ever wonder about it?" a former friend had asked. "No," Power replied. "He knows we don't talk about that." Her recent columns suggest that Power remains too absorbed in self-exploration to focus on her son's dilemma. While her essays often expatiate on cosmetic matters, she has yet to mention missing her son or husband.

Along with her aesthetic focus on diet and appearance, as an idealist, Power remains more interested in motives than relationships. She feels she had good reason for her actions in college, was virtually compelled to do as she did. "I was looking for a nonviolent way to act effectively [against the war], but it didn't exist," she told an interviewer. A National Merit Scholar, Power claimed there was no way a person could protest the war in Vietnam without participating in armed robbery. Circumstances made her do it. She was the *real* victim, a victim of her times. Reporters eagerly regurgitated this convenient theorizing.

Walter Schroeder's daughter Clare, now 43 and newly retired from the police force in Waltham, Massachusetts, offers a clearer analysis of Power's confusion. "She's a very bright woman," Schroeder noted. "All of the ammunition and weapons were stored in her apartment. There had to be a thought [her accomplices] were going to use it." Power was so absorbed in the event's existential value for her that its obvious potential harm to others dwindled to insignificance.

But Boston's major newspaper, the *Globe*, assures readers that Power is not

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only bright, but creative. In prison, she has joined a "women's spirituality group" and writes poems. "A long one describes her as a warrior," gushed an interviewer. And now she pens op-ed columns in which she dwells on sorrows like the fact that she gets only 20 minutes to shave her legs, and sometimes, the water is even tepid! A lengthy puff piece in the *New Yorker* magazine recounted Power's nightmares and dreams of persecution. The reporter focused on how traumatic the aftermath of her crime and surrender have been for Power, lamenting that "Boston newspapers have published negative stories about her."

Negative coverage? When the *Globe* belatedly printed comments by a few of Officer Schroeder's children, the article was surrounded by a sea of copy describing Power's "endogenous clinical depression" and how much she had suffered from living under an assumed name. Readers learned in detail about her regimen of Prozac and Trazodone, and that she has "intensive psychotherapy twice a week." Power now takes courses in writing, journalism, and computers, earning time off her sentence for each state-subsidized venture.

As one might expect with a classy radical victim, Hollywood came calling. The same folks who love Bill Clinton to the tune of $12,500-a-plate fundraisers were hot for Power. Ellen Endo-Dizon, whose company produced a television movie about serial killer and prostitute Aileen Wuornos, said Power's story intrigued her. The only difficulty was technical. "Where do you find an actress who can play someone for over two decades," she mused. But Laura Schiff, manager of Longbow Productions in Studio City, was ecstatic. "It's a journey, a double life, a leaving everything behind," she enthused. "It's hard for anyone to imagine doing that, and that's what's so fascinating."

Judge Robert Banks has forbidden Power to profit from sale of her story, a stricture that must be particularly galling in light of her journalistic success. Galling, indeed, for her essays have a quality suitable for serialization in those glossy magazines at the checkout counter. Power's first column in *The Middlesex News* noted indignantly that she had been handcuffed on her way to prison. "My warrant described me as an escape risk," she wrote, putting "escape risk" in quotation marks, as if that were an unreasonable characterization of someone who evaded capture for 23 years. And she felt it important to record that upon entering MCI, she "was bare-legged, because [her] nylons had failed to make it through the prison's cumbersome property procedures." In her second epistle she whimpered, "somehow we manage . . . with instant coffee," and "sharing three 18″x 24″ mirrors." She must make do with "a wash and go hairstyle and no makeup," and showering "at odd hours of the day."

But lest she be thought petty, her first column turned from thoughts of her lost nylons to the geese that stop by the prison grounds in fall. She lamented that their wetlands are filled and drained, and sought to enter into their thoughts. "Have there been divorces among the flock?" she wondered. "Is it led by young and confident upstarts who dared defy their elders?" Young, confident upstarts like her, perhaps? In the sensitive circles among which Power has moved, animals and people are much alike.

But it wasn't long before Power's essay ("lyrical, but not flowery") turned from personifying animals back to her own suffering. "The geese know a lot more about where they are than I do," she sniffled. "I haven't traveled the roads past local stores and factories where my neighbors work, or the surrounding towns where they live. I don't know the swimming holes, or the best riffles in the rivers. I don't know the shapes and stories of the valleys."

There is an awful lot Katherine Ann Power doesn't know and probably never will. A National Merit Scholar she may have been, but her moral vacuity makes her a virtual black hole of self-absorption. It was left to Erin Schroeder, 11 months old when her father was killed, and now a Boston police officer, to clarify the issue at hand. "I think that she [Power] is delusional," she said. "Does she realize why she's in jail? She's not there on a retreat."

Once upon a time, ethics meant taking responsibility for your acts, especially for their effect on other people, in this case, the Schroeders. Power's attorney, Rikki Kleiman, said that her efforts "to give Katherine a new life" would "close the book" on the Schroeders' suffering. Close the book? So much for "charity."

Eugene Narrett is a professor of English at Framingham State College.

Letter From Dublin

by Derek Turner

Saving the Irish From Civilization

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Despite Dublin's busy streets, Dublin still has a country-town atmosphere, and the visitor has a definite sense of being just a little behind the times. Part of the reason for this ambiance is that Dublin is a very small capital city. There are only a million or so people living in the whole Greater Dublin region. One is always close to open countryside. Indeed, from any part of Dublin, one can see the mountains that bound the city to the south. But there are plenty of other day-to-day reminders of the bucolic hinterland.

Children from blighted inner-city estates keep horses as pets and graze them beneath the tower blocks. In the vast Phoenix Park, right in the center of town, elegant fallow deer graze, oblivious to commuters' cars and the official motorcades to and from the President's residence, the American ambassador's residence, and the Papal Nunciature. Grubby caravans inhabited by feckless, coarse-looking tinkers, who claim to be descended from the Irishmen expelled from Drogheda by Cromwell, crop up in even the most genteel suburbs. In these same suburbs, there are strange isolated fields where there should be houses, and dolmens in otherwise well-ordered back gardens. Haggard women sell sprays of heather in the streets. People still speak in local accents. The street names are written in Irish as well as English. There are virtually no obvious immigrants (who may well be deterred by a vague idea that Ireland is in a state of constant civil war), and the Catholic churches can still muster up large congregations.

It is likewise impossible to escape noticing relics of Ireland's painful, glorious past. Behind one of Dublin's two Protestant Cathedrals, artists have limned bronze outlines on the pavement of the Viking artifacts found on that spot and in that position, just as they were dropped or lost by Dublin's founders. In St. Michan's church, where Edmund Burke was baptized, one can even touch

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the strangely well-preserved corpses of medieval Dubliners. There are plenty of signs of Queen Anne and the Georges, when Dublin was the second city of the Empire. Swift was Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral, and is buried there near Stella. His annotated copy of Clarendon's *History of the Scotch Rebellion* ("Thoroughly un-Scotifyed" is one of his approving comments) is still to be seen in the library founded by an enlightened Archbishop in 1701. Dublin is full of magnificent Georgian terraces, and there are wonderful individual buildings, like Sir William Chambers' Casino at Marino, a small but faultless delight in the grounds of a school surrounded by housing estates. There are many memorials to national heroes, the largest of which is Glasnevin Cemetery, where Daniel O'Connell, C.S. Parnell, and others are interred. The cemetery is full of Celtic crosses and even a fake round tower, the dead heroes deliberately linked to powerful icons of "ould Ireland," and thus themselves forming a part of the nativist's landscape. Both concepts, of country and countryside, are consciously united in the paintings of the 1930's artist Sean Keating, with clear-eyed Aran Islands fishermen and strong-sinewed crofters staring into the Celtic sunrise.

Everywhere one goes in the countryside, one sees the roofless medieval churches, round towers, and carved Celtic crosses that are so characteristic of Ireland. The dramatically situated monastic city of Glendalough, the Romanesque doorway at remote Clonfert, the worn pilgrim's causeway at Clonmacnoise, the surreal Apostles on the High Cross at Moone, the lavabo at Mellifont, the delicate carvings in the arcades at Jerpoint, the Butler tomb in Kilkenny Cathedral, Cormac's Chapel at Cashel with its centaur ornamentation—wherever one goes there are constant reminders of the days when Irish scholars kept alight a small flame of learning in a Europe sunk in post-Roman darkness. So important was the Irish contribution to the cause of Europe that a recent book is entitled *How the Irish Saved Civilization*. The title is only mildly hyperbolic. There are still plenty of signs of the pre-Christians, whose secret sites and symbols were often suddenly transmuted into Christian shrines and emblems, like the eerie, obviously pagan Janus figure that has stood since time immemorial in a dank churchyard on an island in Lough Erne, the similarities in symbolism serving to unite the pre- and post-Christian Irish experiences in an incremental, organic whole.

With all of this evidence of former glories, with the survival of rural virtues, and with Northern Ireland exerting its disquieting influence, it is not surprising that the Irish still think of themselves as a nation (although they are overly fond of their lucrative servitude to the European Union). But nationalism is largely a left-wing cause in Ireland. It is all too easy for nationalists to see commonalties between themselves and Third World liberation movements, and to view the Irish situation "in context," as part of a global struggle against colonialism, imperialism, "the Establishment," patriarchy, "homophobia," racism, and so forth. In fact, Ireland is generally short of right-of-center institutions. Except for one business-oriented Sunday newspaper, there are no right-of-center newspapers save for the *Irish Catholic*, with a circulation of around 28,000. There is no sizable right-of-center political party, except for the Progressive Democrats, with about five percent of the vote and several TDs (the Republic has a proportional representation system), whose conservatism is mostly about the free market. The reason that there is no conservative party, according to David Quinn, editor of the *Irish Catholic*, is that the Church has historically filled this role. However, Gerard Casey, lecturer in psychology at University College, Dublin, believes that there is scope for a genuinely conservative party, and his Christian Solidarity Party is preparing itself for the next local elections.

Dublin is a little like London in the 1960's, with young, well-educated people everywhere, and a general feeling of liberation and prosperity. The adverse effects of the decline of Ireland's puritanical form of Catholicism have not yet begun to show themselves, and the national feeling will long delay and for longer ameliorate social decay. It is certainly the case that most Irish people are innately conservative, not to mention individualistic and essentially metaphysical. Generally ill-equipped for the amoral, antiseptic, nonjudgmental, highly regulated society that many would like to see come to pass, the Irish do not naturally incline to the liberal model of society. But nor did the British, and unless new publications and institutions arise to codify and direct this sound instinct and reinforce the nationalist sentiment which is Ireland's single biggest social asset, it is possible that in 30 years or so Dubliners might find themselves living in a miniature version of London.

Derek Turner is the editor of Right Now!, *published in London.*

Letter From Pittsburgh

by Sarah J. McCarthy

Pizza Politics

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Pittsburgh's Human Relations Commission did the right thing in January in the pizza "redlining" case against Pizza Hut brought by Carl and Shelia Truss. The Trusses, a middle-class black couple who reside in a mixed-race area of well-kept homes in the upper Hill District area of Pittsburgh, also known as Sugar Top, phoned Pizza Hut to order a sausage pizza on the night of May 2, 1992, but were refused delivery due to the rioting in Los Angeles following the Rodney King verdict.

Shelia Truss told the Pizza Hut clerk that all was peaceful and quiet in her neighborhood. "What does what's going on in California have to do with me?" she asked, upset that she couldn't have her usual weekly delivery. Mrs. Truss, who testified that she was stewing, spastic, venting, hyper, and obsessed after the refusal, walked across the street in her pajamas to visit her attorney friend, Ann Simms, complaining that she could not get a pizza. Ms. Simms then filed a complaint with the Human Relations Commission (HRC), resulting in a four-year investigation into whether Pizza Hut was guilty of unlawful public accommodation practices.

"We wanted to err on the side of caution," testified Mike Logan, Pizza Hut manager, at the HRC hearing. When the store first opened in April 1991, he said, Pizza Hut delivered to the Hill District, but due to several robberies of their drivers, deliveries were curbed. Logan said the sight of white truck driver

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Reginald Denny being pulled from his cab, during the L.A. riots, and beaten by black rioters further worried the company.

Last summer, Charles Morrison, HRC Director, stated that Pizza Hut's failure to deliver to the Trusses was probably a case of "illegal redlining." He told the Pittsburgh *Post Gazette* that "We had looked at it every which way and couldn't see Pizza Hut's defense as legitimate." Morrison argued that the HRC was going after "a large company, not a mom-and-pop store," as if it would make any difference to a parent whose son or daughter was shot while delivering a pizza.

Claiming that the HRC had "declared war on pizza shops," and fearing that they were going to be forced to deliver to unsafe neighborhoods, a grassroots group sprung up called the Pittsburgh Pizza Coalition. Vowing not to give up their rights, or their lives, without a fight, pizza drivers and shop owners demonstrated on the steps of Pittsburgh's City-County building an hour before the January hearing. Co-organizer Dan Sullivan said that he worked for the Pizza Hut store that was "being smeared" by the HRC: "I went to work there when that shop first opened. We went door-to-door in the Hill District, delivering coupons for discounts on pizzas. The shop definitely wanted to do business in the neighborhood."

"We had drivers robbed every day," explained Sullivan. "In East Liberty, we had the same driver robbed three times in one day. They usually robbed us with a gun. They know we're not allowed to carry a gun, or more than $20. If we'd drive to the Hill District, they hid in the bushes across Herron Avenue to rob us. Drivers would quit after a couple of days."

"I Won't Die for a $9 Pie," read the magic-marker inscription on the raised pizza box of Jane Wadsworth, owner of Pizza Outlet in the Greenfield section of Pittsburgh. Her husband, she said, once had a loaded pistol held to his head while delivering. "I've been robbed," read the pizza box sign held by Alexander Lifshitz, a Russian émigré who delivers pizza to support his family.

"In memory of Jay Weiss," read one of the homemade signs. Jay Weiss was murdered in 1993 while delivering for Chubby's Pizza in the Manchester area of Pittsburgh. Weiss, a 34-year-old father of three children, accompanied pizza driver Paul Puhac on the delivery because Puhac was a bit apprehensive about going to that section of Manchester alone. Both men were shot, Weiss fatally.

Pittsburgh police said that a few blocks away, two teenagers who lived in an abandoned house ate the pizza they had ordered as a ruse to rob the delivery men. As coroner's deputies removed the body of the slain delivery man, people in the crowd that gathered laughed out loud. Veteran homicide detectives shook their heads in disbelief.

At a break in the hearing, I suggested to Attorney Simms that this case seemed not to be about racial discrimination, but about Pizza Hut's concern for the safety of their drivers. "Bulls---!" she replied, as if a multinational corporation, or any company for that matter, could possibly care for the safety of its employees, an attitude not uncommon among civil rights activists and personal injury attorneys.

Ms. Simms' advertisement in the Pittsburgh Yellow Pages promotes herself as an attorney specializing in "Criminal-Personal Injury-Civil Rights-Social Security-Disability-Workers Compensation." If Pizza Hut sent a driver into a dangerous area where he or she was injured or killed, lawyers like Ms. Simms are all too eager to sue the company for being "negligent" and valuing profits over peoples' lives. In a catch-22 situation, Pizza Hut was charged for being overly concerned with safety.

"How did it make you feel, when you couldn't get a pizza?" Simms asked her client. "I felt sad and ashamed," said Carl Truss. "This is modern times. 1992. You wouldn't think that this kind of thing was going on."

It would be easy to trivialize this case as just much ado about a sausage pizza. Still, the civil rights movement in our time has focused on many mundane events, like being refused the right to sip a Coke at a Woolworth counter or to sit in the front section of a bus. The small everyday things that are denied to blacks, or said, make up the quality of their lives. An accumulation of such things makes one feel humiliated, separated, second-class, and alienated.

Indeed, it is a shame that people like the Trusses, through no fault of their own, couldn't get something as simple as a pizza, but the solution is not to sue Pizza Hut. The answer is to attack crime so that businesses, both black and white, large and small, can prosper in all our neighborhoods. During the hearing, I wondered how the Trusses would feel if a young black man, maybe their son, were forced to deliver pizza to an area where the KKK was up-in-arms. Most of us would consider it a travesty for a store owner to force a black driver into such an area.

During the pizza drivers' protest and the HRC hearing, Pittsburgh's talk shows were ablaze with the pizza controversy. Exhibiting the common sense that seems to have fled today's civil rights establishment and many legal proceedings, even the liberal talk show hosts and their callers were opposed to forcible delivery of pizza to crime-ridden areas. Against this backdrop of public outcry, the case against Pizza Hut was dismissed by the Human Relations Commission on a technicality. Appeals may be pending.

Sarah J. McCarthy is a freelance writer in Pittsburgh.

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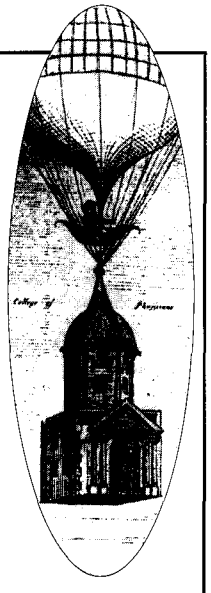

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LITERATURE

August Derleth and Arkham House

by Peter Ruber

August Derleth was one of the principal forces that established science fiction as a legitimate literary genre. He was a product of the "pulp" era, who founded a unique publishing company in 1939 called Arkham House. He had no long-range agenda for his progeny other than to rescue the writings of his late friend and mentor H.P. Lovecraft, a writer as strange as the stories he wrote, who had toiled in the poor-paying pulp magazines for several decades without gaining a wide readership.

Derleth, who was emerging then as a promising writer of regional literature, made a strong effort to persuade Maxwell Perkins, his editor at Chas. Scribner's Sons, to consider the stories of H.P. Lovecraft. When he was rejected on what Perkins said were purely economic considerations, an excuse he heard from other editors he knew, Derleth decided to take on the responsibility of publishing Lovecraft. Using the greater portion of a $5,000 fee that *Redbook* magazine had paid for one of his novels, Derleth and fellow *Weird Tales* writer Donald Wandrei established Arkham House, the name taken from Lovecraft's place-name for legend-haunted Salem, Massachusetts.

What Derleth knew about the business side of publishing and selling could be summed up in a few sentences, though he often told his own publishers how to market his books. Derleth's first Lovecraftian collection was *The Outsider and Others*, a 553-page book that was published in 1939. That was followed in 1943 by *Beyond the Wall of Sleep*, and in succeeding years such classics as *Marginalia*, *The Lurker at the Threshold*, and *Something About Cats and Other Pieces*. When he had exhausted Lovecraft's slender output, he began a series of posthumous collaborations based on his mentor's notes and unfinished manuscripts, even using plots suggested in Lovecraft's letters, always sharing the credit even if he did 90 percent of the work.

In 1941, two years after publishing the first Lovecraft book, Derleth began to see the possibility of using the Arkham House imprint as a vehicle for some of his own and Wandrei's writings, and for resurrecting the careers of other *Weird Tales* writers, as well as some British writers he admired. And so began a lifelong odyssey to preserve the best of a literary genre that had launched Derleth's own prolific career in 1927. In time, commercial publishers began knocking on Derleth's door for reprint rights and to assemble new anthologies.

Derleth had a great fondness for science fiction. He wrote a few "pure" science fiction stories, but they weren't always successful in execution. His sympathies lay in the past, not the future. Where he did excel was as an editor of science fiction anthologies. He had an uncanny ability to sniff out the best of the old and new and assemble them into some remarkable collections for Pellegrini and Cudahy. In a space of five years, from 1948-1953, Pellegrini and Cudahy published seven of Derleth's science fiction anthologies, and in 1954, Farrar & Rhinehart published his last two—*Portals of Tomorrow* and *Time to Come*. Almost all had overseas publication in Great Britain and have been widely reprinted by paperback publishers.

For some reason the market for science fiction anthologies dissipated in the mid-1950's. Readers were demanding novels, and soon the paperback market was glutted with originals and reprints and a succession of pulp-type sci-fi magazines like the *Magazine of Science and Science Fiction* and *Analog*, and several years passed before anthologies began to cycle through again. By that time, too, other writers and editors had begun to use their influence in the publishing world, and Derleth lost interest. He liked being a trailblazer. When he had popularized a movement or a genre, he moved on to other projects.

When Derleth published an Arkham House chapbook in 1962 entitled *100 Books by August Derleth*, a small section listing a dozen or so books that were "Awaiting Publication" went almost unnoticed except by fans and collectors of the author. It listed a science fiction anthology called *New Horizons*, the manuscript of which was presumed lost after his death because it never turned up in his papers at the Wisconsin State Historical Society.

Last year, when I acquired from his daughter April Derleth a mountain of unpublished manuscripts, I was pleased to find *New Horizons* intact and immediately arranged to have it published in 1998 by Arkham House. *New Horizons* is aptly named because it contains science fiction stories culled from the early decades of this century and more or less showcases the genre in a variety of fields, ranging from weird science to space travel. It is an interesting collection that contains stories by a few well-known writers and some who are known primarily to madcap collectors. Since Derleth had not included any of his own stories, I added an interesting novelette he had collaborated on with Mark Schorer called "In the Kingdom of the Sea," which is loosely associated with Lovecraft's "Cthulhu Mythos" and time travelers from another dimension. It was written in 1930 or 1931, but had never been published.

In recent years some upstart collectors of Lovecraft's writings have found it good sport to deride Derleth's motives behind creating Lovecraft's literary reputation. They have claimed on various Internet websites that Derleth made a small fortune off Lovecraft. This is nonsense, and those who knew Derleth during the years he guided Arkham House are well aware that the publishing company would not have survived if he hadn't infused it with large sums from his own writing income.

Very often books that had been announced were delayed because of Arkham's financial situation. Derleth ran the publishing company by himself (with a part-time secretary) for the better part of 20 years, typing invoices, packing orders, keeping the laborious financial records, and writing late into the night to pay the bills. It was not until the early 1960's that he could afford a part-

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time helper to take the physical work of fulfilling orders off his shoulders. Then, too, when Arkham's inventory ran out of space in his basement and attic, he borrowed from the bank to build a climate-controlled warehouse.

In addition to extracting a physical toll on his health, the demands of running Arkham House affected Derleth's writing career during the last 20 years of his life. Instead of devoting time to his creative writing and his Sac Prairie Saga, he ground out a lot of commercial work for his New York publishers—histories, contract biographies, historical novels he cared little about writing, junior mysteries. To gain some measure of creative satisfaction he self-published books of poetry and spent odd hours writing mystery stories and working on such monumental works as *Walden West* and *Return to Walden West*, the latter published only a year before his death in 1971.

Another little-known fact is that Derleth sponsored the books of many young writers like Ramsey Campbell, among others, who have mined Lovecraft's Cthulhu Mythos and expanded it into new and interesting dimensions. He believed Lovecraft would have approved, because during the decade that the two men corresponded, Lovecraft encouraged the younger writer to experiment with the mythos, as he did with others in his inner circle. And when Derleth and Donald Wandrei began collecting as many of Lovecraft's letters as they could in the late 1930's, they set in motion a whole cottage industry of scholars who today continue to analyze and write about Lovecraft as minutely as a forensic scientist.

Today, Arkham House has a number of rivals who are determined to carve out a share of the market that Derleth spent a lifetime cultivating. That was to be expected. But it is harder now to make a go of it because of the distribution dynamics within the publishing industry. Derleth saw that happening long before his death, and he fully expected Arkham House to perish soon after him. He didn't realize how much momentum he had created with his unique editorial policy, or that Arkham House had developed a life of its own. Even legal and editorial bungling in later years could not derail the enterprise. In the past year, his daughter April has taken over the editorial as well as the business responsibilities of Arkham House with a fresh viewpoint and enthusiasm that I expect will move the publishing house into the next century.

While Derleth's regional writing has been plowed under the avalanche of time, it too is on the verge of a renaissance through a serious publishing effort that is reprinting his major books and bringing out many recently discovered manuscripts including many novels, short stories, poetry, journals, literary criticism, and miscellaneous nonfiction. In this group will be new collections of fantasy and mystery stories, some featuring his detective Solar Pons, a pastiche-series of Sherlock Holmes that ran to more than 70 stories.

Whatever history doles out for August Derleth, most historians and critics of the science fiction and fantasy genre will no doubt recognize his enormous contribution in legitimizing and preserving some of the best stories and writers of his time. Few writers have had such a strong sense of loyalty to their mentors and to a literary genre.

Peter Ruber was one of August Derleth's last publishers and will be editing the two dozen manuscripts recently discovered at Derleth's home in Sauk City, Wisconsin.

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CRIME

The Politics of Hate Crime Statistics

by Joseph E. Fallon

The FBI's "Hate Crime Statistics"—preliminary figures for 1995 were released in November—are highly suspect because of the agency's flawed methodology. The problem is that, in recording and identifying the perpetrators of hate crimes, there are no strictly defined categories for thugs of "European-American," "Hispanic," or "Middle Eastern" descent. The term "Hispanic" has already been officially defined by Public Law 94-311 and Directive Number 15 of the Office of Management and Budget as "a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race." Employing the category "Middle Eastern" would probably be more convenient and less confusing than the heading currently used—"North Africa and Southwest Asia"—to identify anyone from that region of the world. And regarding the term "European-American," it has not been officially recognized by the federal government. It is essential that this last category be implemented and defined as "a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe—i.e., the British Isles, Iceland, and the European continent as bordered by the Pyrenees, the Caucasus, and the Ural mountains." This definition conforms to the standard already established by the federal government for defining Americans with origins in the Middle East and Asia, while avoiding the possibility of mistakenly including Hispanics in this category.

The FBI's current methodology for determining hate crimes is based on Public Law 101-275, the "Hate Crime Statistics Act" of 1990, which was enacted by Congress on April 23, 1990. This legislation mandated that the U.S. Attorney General establish guidelines and collect data "about crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, including where appropriate the crimes

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of murder, non-negligent manslaughter; forcible rape; aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation; arson; and destruction, damage, or vandalism of property." After the Attorney General delegated this responsibility to the director of the FBI, "the task of developing the procedures for, and managing the implementation of, the collection of hate crime data" was assigned to the Uniform Crime Reports Section of the FBI. Because of the time which elapsed before that FBI section received this assignment, 1991 was the first year for which hate crime statistics could be compiled. Since then, the specific types of hate crimes reported by the FBI have been: "Racial—anti-white, anti-black, anti-American Indian/Alaskan Native, anti-Asian/Pacific Islander, anti-multiracial group"; "Ethnicity/National Origin: anti-Hispanic, anti-other ethnicity/national origin"; "Religious: anti-Jewish, anti-Catholic, anti-Protestant, anti-Islamic, anti-other religious group, anti-multireligious group, anti-atheism/agnosticism/etc."; "Sexual Orientation: anti-male homosexual, anti-female homosexual, anti-homosexual, anti-heterosexual, anti-bisexual."

As the above listing makes clear, the FBI does identify *victims* of hate crimes by race, ethnicity/national origin, religion, or sexual orientation, in conformity with congressional intent. The FBI does not, however, apply the same standards to *perpetrators* of hate crimes. Instead, perpetrators are identified only by race: white, black, American Indian/Alaskan native, Asian/Pacific Islander, multiracial group, or unknown. The problem is that, according to this methodology, Hispanics are recognized as victims, but not as perpetrators. Since most Hispanics are often officially classified as "white"—the Department of Health and Human Services, for example, in its June 1996 report on illegitimacy rates in the United States for 1994, counted *91 percent* of all unwed Hispanic women who gave birth as "white" in order to arrive at a 25 percent illegitimacy rate for "whites"—and since perpetrators of hate crimes are only recognized by race, Hispanics committing hate crimes are often classified as "white." The Department of Justice reports that for the federal prison system alone in 1991, the most recent year for which this statistic is available, Hispanics represented 28 percent of the total prison population, which then numbered 54,006. How many of these Hispanic convicts had committed hate crimes? Under the FBI's methodology, it is impossible to say.

Moreover, not only is it highly likely that a Hispanic's attack on an Asian, a black, or a Jew will be classified as a "white" hate crime, but apparently if one Hispanic attacks another Hispanic—for instance, if a Mexican attacks a Cuban—that too will be listed as a "white" hate crime. An additional problem, one making the Census Bureau's more restricted term of "White Not of Hispanic Origin" equally inappropriate, is that everyone from the Middle East, which is officially identified as North Africa and Southwest Asia (i.e., Arabs, Berbers, Baluchis, Kurds, Persians, Turks, etc.), is classified as "white." Any attacks or acts of intimidation or vandalism against Asians, blacks, or Jews by members of these communities would therefore also be classified as "white" hate crimes. Again, the FBI's methodology makes it impossible to ascertain how many "white" hate crimes are really perpetrated by North Africans and Southwest Asians.

Members of these same communities, however, when they are the *victims* of hate crimes, are *not* classified as "white" but rather by their "ethnicity/national origin" or "religion." Therefore, according to the official records, North Africans and Southwest Asians, like Hispanics, can only be *victims*, not perpetrators, of hate crimes.

For the five years for which hate crime statistics have been compiled, the FBI reports that the percentage of all hate crimes perpetrated by "whites" has been: 65 percent in 1991, 64 percent in 1992, 51 percent in 1993, 57 percent in 1994, and 59 percent in 1995. And because of its flawed methodology, the public is misled into believing that European-Americans are the principal perpetrators of the hate crimes against Hispanics, North Africans, and Southwest Asians. For people to assume that "white" is synonymous with "European-Americans" is understandable. After all, according to the 1990 Census, more than 93 percent of all "whites" *are* European-Americans. This fact does not mean, however, that over 93 percent of the "white-perpetrated hate crimes" are committed by European-Americans.

The meaninglessness of this "white" category can be seen in how the federal government treats the former Soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kirgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. While the United Nations officially identifies these states as Asian—they are, after all, located in Asia and, with a few exceptions, are populated primarily by groups that are racially Asian—the U.S. Agency for International Development, the U.S. Census Bureau, and the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service all classify the five Central Asian republics as "European."

The current methodology employed by the FBI in compiling hate crime statistics is clearly inaccurate and misleading. If the FBI would employ the terms "European-American," "Hispanic," and "Middle Eastern" when identifying the perpetrators of such crimes, it could correct this problem and introduce some much-needed rationality to its operations. The true victims and perpetrators of these crimes could then be known and dealt with accordingly.

Joseph E. Fallon writes from Rye, New York.

MILITARY

Sex Scandal du Jour

by Brian Mitchell

Remember Gwen Dreyer? No, of course not. She was the poor, unfortunate midshipman who was "chained to a urinal" at the United States Naval Academy in the winter of 1990. The incident came at the end of a long day of snowball fights and practical jokes, in which Ms. Dreyer had willingly taken part. Sometime later, Dreyer left the academy and used her humiliation in the men's room to explain to her father why she had left. Her father complained to the academy, which investigated and reprimanded the midshipmen involved.

It did not end there, of course. The local papers heard about the urinal, and what began with a snowball fight quickly snowballed into a national scandal. Before long the academy was facing two internal and two congressional investigations into the incident. Nine months later, *l'affaire Dreyer* culminated with a press conference on Capitol Hill, at

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which the academy's board of visitors, led by Senator Barbara Mikulski (D-Maryland) and Representative Helen Bentley (R-Maryland), certified the academy's conversion from callous disregard for feminine sensitivities to fervent champion of the rights of military women.

All of this happened before Tailhook, and before the humiliating aftermath of Tailhook (which forced a Secretary of the Navy and a Chief of Naval Operations out of office), and before the Navy's abandonment of Admiral Stanley Arthur for his alleged insensitivity to alleged sex discrimination, and, of course, before Admiral Mike Boorda's shocking suicide, interpreted by some as an act of atonement for the Navy's many sins and by others as a cowardly exit to avoid having to endure his own personal disgrace.

Now it is the Army's turn. After initial attempts to downplay reports of sexual abuse at Maryland's Aberdeen Proving Grounds, the Army has shifted into high gear to show that it has learned from the Navy's experience not to take such things lightly. Soldiers worldwide have been encouraged to call the Army's new 24-hour harassment hotline, which in its first 12 weeks logged nearly 7,000 calls and 1,074 allegations of sexual abuse. The old threat to "drop a dime" on someone has taken on a new meaning.

Military justice is swift. Already there have been convictions, but there have also been acquittals—of a staff sergeant at Fort Leonard Wood charged with alleged sexual misconduct, and of a West Point cadet accused of raping another West Point cadet after a drunken beach party. In the latter case, Army investigators had recommended against a court martial (both male and female witnesses supported the defense), but the Army chose to try a man for rape rather than appear insufficiently sensitive to women.

Young and not guilty (if not entirely innocent), the accused cadet may soon recover from his ordeal, but the Army's senior enlisted man, Sergeant Major of the Army Gene C. McKinney, will have no such chance. McKinney has been suspended from duty following public accusations from a female sergeant major that he came on to her in a hotel room in Hawaii last year. No evidence and no witnesses, but a career ruined and a man disgraced.

To top things off, five women now claim Army investigators coerced them into making *false* accusations of rape, threatening them with prosecution for having consensual sex if they did not cooperate. The words "witch hunt" and "inquisition" have not appeared in the many press reports on the growing scandal (such words now being reserved for the military's prosecution of homosexuals), but what terms can better describe Army-wide efforts to ferret out the perpetrators of politically heinous crimes and to intimidate everyone else into cooperating with the official policy of "zero tolerance"?

The poster child for this year's inquisition is a cute young recruit with baby-blue eyes who, by her own admission, acquiesced to having sex not once but twice with a male sergeant because she "thought she had to," according to the *New York Times*. The *Times* quoted the young woman saying, "When he got through [the second time], he was like: 'Get out. Don't get in my face.'" One could view this woman as an innocent young soldier ("solidly built . . . with a firm jaw") victimized by a predatory superior and the Army's sexist culture, but one could also see her as a young woman of low morals whose light regard for her own virtue naturally invited others to treat her as trash.

There is plenty of trash in the military. There always has been and probably always will be. Volunteer militaries in particular tend to fill their ranks from the lowest levels of society, "the very scum of the earth," in the Duke of Wellington's words. The only difference today is that the United States military enlists not only male scum but female scum as well, and when you put the two together things happen. Sex happens. Pregnancy happens. Jealousy happens. Cruelty happens. Rape happens. And it all happens not just in the trailer parks off post but in the barracks, in the field, aboard ship, stateside and overseas, in wartime as in peacetime.

It has been ten years since the Army published a pamphlet on feminine hygiene in the field, advising soldiers at Fort Meade, Maryland:

> Sex does not just happen in a garrison setting. If you are on birth-control pills, make sure that you bring enough packs along to last you for the exercise, and an extra pack in case something happens to the one you're currently on.

Now, finally, some guardians of the nation's conscience are edging closer to admitting that sexual integration may just be beyond the military's professional competence. A recent cover article of the *New Republic* all but endorses an all-male military. Other left-of-center opinion-leaders like Richard Cohen at the *Washington Post* have confessed their waning confidence in the feminist dream of military glory.

The Army itself is now reconsidering its second attempt at gender-integrated basic training (the first attempt was declared a failure in 1982), but resegregating basic training would not have spared the women at Aberdeen Proving Grounds, nor will it alone solve the many problems that women cause the services, all now well known in Washington if not openly admitted. Only a complete reversal of current policy, with an unprecedented admission that sexual equality, however desirable, just does not work in the military, would wake the military from this nightmare of embarrassment and deceit.

Anything less and the assaults, accusations, and inquisitions will continue, like periodic outbreaks of a deadly disease slowly corrupting and destroying the spirit, soul, and body of a once-great institution. What did not begin with Tailhook will not end with Aberdeen.

Brian Mitchell is the author of Weak Link: The Feminization of the American Military. *He has just finished a book entitled* The Scandal of Gender, *a compilation of writings about the sexes by early Christian saints.*

LIBERAL ARTS

CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

An article in the *Las Vegas Sun* last January reported that a 28-year-old woman in Las Vegas had been sentenced to two to five years in prison for arranging the disfigurement of her boyfriend's former wife. Maritza Marincota paid fellow immigrant Rudy Estevez $350 to throw sulfuric acid on school librarian Toni Smith, who suffered permanent burns on her left arm, leg, buttock, and breast. A man who rushed to Smith's aid in the parking lot outside the school testified how her clothes had "smoldered off her body."

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REGIONALISM

The American Redneck

by Joyce Bennett

There ain't no shame in a job well done,
from driving a nail to driving a truck.
As a matter of fact, I'd like to set things straight,
A few more people should be pulling their weight.
If you want a cram course in reality,
You get yourself a working man's Ph.D.

—Aaron Tippin,
"Working Man's Ph.D."

The hyperactive shopping mall aficionados and franchise restaurant diners who populate the United States fail to understand the subtleties of character that mark the American redneck, a man who, surprisingly, tolerates and even calls himself by the nickname, confounding those who would mock him. And for years Hollywood and New York, through cinema and television, have obscured his true identity by portraying him as a knuckle-dragging misogynist who prowls backroads in search of fawns and members of minority groups to shoot. Informed by media propaganda, the public fears that all over the country, like rustic Caesars hot from Hell, bumpkin male revolutionaries seeking vengeance against the government are poised to murder and plunder. As we look toward a less than promising future, rather than dishonoring this heartlander by accepting the same old caricatures imposed upon us by unenlightened filmmakers and television producers, we should be celebrating the redneck's brand of diversity and learning from his example.

Ill-at-ease in a society ruled by hard-charging women and word-mincing liberals, the redneck struggles to adapt to a world less and less governed by horse sense, and with each new generation, his personality traits are a little more subdued. If recalcitrant citizens of his kind fade from the landscape and are replaced by soft, easily policed proletarians not at all outraged by trespasses against civil liberties, then our end could be as certain as many predict. Before those of us who know his worth begin singing dirges for him prematurely, as we have been mourning America's final days perhaps too soon, we should first recognize who the redneck is and how he has safeguarded our system of self-government in the past and can now serve us as a paradigm for the free man inspiring us as we strive to keep our shaky republic. To define him more clearly, we need to take a closer look at how he is viewed by those who would belittle and seek to change him.

More and more, the modern redneck is coming into contact with the overly-credentialed and undereducated hordes moving from urban to rural areas. Claiming intellectual superiority to the natives they encounter, these interlopers are maddeningly unaware of their own shortcomings. In my work in the area of career services during the last 12 years, I have met hundreds of dislocated megalopolitan Northerners. A New Jersey middle-school teacher who recently moved to my once agricultural county, had occasion to write something that I reviewed. In her writing, she spelled intact, "in tack." Another transplant was amazed at the apparent inability of us yokels to spell or say the word "indigo" properly. He was referring to the name of the local town that we call St. Inigoe's in honor of a celebrated theologian whose family's lineage can be traced back to Visigothic Spain. I didn't correct him because, at the time, I was trying to be less preachy and more charitable toward these city slickers who assume that an appreciation for both Dwight Yokum and Debussy cannot be found in the same individual and who believe that country people as a rule are ignorant and uncouth. To those living in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston who confuse mother wit with wisdom, rural and stupid have become synonymous over the years. And they seem to have a particular contempt for rural men, whom they consider pea-brained tyrants reigning over equally illiterate but appealingly downtrodden women and children.

Contrary to what urbanites might think, there are many well-educated good old boys and a few who are classical scholars. One whom I know is a 1955 graduate of what was at the time considered an excellent liberal arts college. While attending school, he usually went hungry and, when no one was looking, would fish uneaten, still cellophane-wrapped sandwiches out of the cafeteria waste bins. On weekends he would hitchhike the 100 miles from Baltimore to his home and while there would take his shotgun out into the woods to kill squirrel and rabbit to help feed his estimable but impoverished family. They lived on a diet consisting largely of wild game and rice, but their table was impeccably set because a lack of resources had provided no excuse for the abandonment of good breeding.

Weathering financial hardship, he finally succeeded in earning his diploma. In spite of his erudition, and his ability to speak and read ancient and modern languages and to translate French newspapers or the Latin inscriptions written on the tombstones he seeks out in old Episcopal churchyards, he remains a country boy who does not question why someone would be moved to tears as quickly by a bird dog on point at his master's command as by a reading of one of Swinburne's elegies. Speaking in an accent rich with an Elizabethan heritage, he'll tell you that his most prized possession is the Model 40 John Deere tractor he used for many years to work his land to earn extra money to supplement the income from a regular, full-time job. In connection with the latter, he had often been called on to testify as an expert witness during court proceedings. Assured, urbanized attorneys hearing a drawl and observing a Victorian courtesy, sized him up and usually underestimated him, but when they discovered that the self-effacing rube before them was in actuality a learned man, they quietly backed down.

While the country boy is mannerly, the aggressive err in assuming his polite behavior to be a manifestation of weakness. Like Allen Tate's "Good Soldier," he characteristically displays intelligence and courage on the battlefield, and he and his sort have been known to fight starving and barefoot yet triumphing over superior numbers, as the Army of Northern Virginia demonstrated repeatedly against vast arrays of smartly-appointed and well-fed Yankees. And getting down to basics, men who have always lived off the land are naturally good shots, and fortunately for those who love them, they are also survivors. My father,

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who received the Purple Heart after taking shrapnel in the head in France during World War II, and my brother Charles, an ex-Marine sergeant who saw action in Vietnam, both came home. Unlike Daddy, Charles had to go to war knowing that he was despised by many of those for whom he fought, but his bred-in-the-bone convictions allowed him no other alternative and gave him the strength to perform his sad duty. Unlike today's new women who profess a desire to play G.I. Joe, I will admit that I do not own the grit to have faced what Charles and my father faced, but I am sure that ladies like these tough cookies have only intellectualized war and would quickly change their tune if they were confronted with the realities of a patrol in-country or of a landing at Normandy. The valor and fighting skill demonstrated by my kin is born of a culture which honors the tradition of men defending their own—a culture still found in places like Westmoreland County, Virginia, the boyhood home of Washington and Lee.

While duty-bound and strong-hearted Jarheads and Army grunts seem to spring from conservative communities, sometimes down-home milieus can produce atypical rednecks. I know one who breaks all the rules. He is also my brother—I was blessed with six. He is gay and refers to himself as Jem in the vernacular of Dupont Circle, but we, his family, still call him Jimmy, probably to his embarrassment. He is a political activist and is often seen on television and in the pages of the *Washington Post*. A cashmere-clad epicure, brunching at the Mayflower on Sundays, he gives dinner parties reminiscent of an older, more refined Washington. Jimmy by design is a million miles away from his country roots, but, affluent, citified, and somewhat condescending liberal that he is, if threatened by a predator on the streets of D.C., he reacts the way he learned to react as a boy and thrashes his opponent as well as any honky-tonk brawler. Jimmy will take a stand against a violent man when others might back down because his birthright will not allow him to be a victim. He remains, in spite of himself, just a country boy at heart.

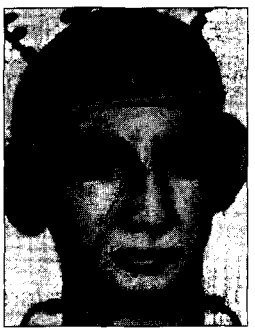
The quintessential country boy, however, is my son. He is a tradesman, a hunter, a NASCAR fan, and he drives a half-ton Ford pickup truck. As you travel, you can see others like him talking among themselves of Parker Double Barrels, who's on the pole at Talladega, and the pheasant season in South Dakota as they buy half-smokes and beef jerky at roadside stores. Known by names such as Sissy Baby, Teeny Boy, and Possum, my son's friends seldom travel without their hound dogs, usually called Annie or Molly. These young men have been socialized to revere their elders, including those who are strangers to them. They will greet you and hold doors for you and call you ma'am, but they won't look through you as do most of today's solipsistic young, the natural products of anarchic, materialistic families.

Although I do not consider myself to have been the perfect mother, I am happy to say that I somehow managed to raise a redneck. My Generation X good old boy is smart, ethical, and has a sense of history. He understands what happened at Sharpsburg and Wilderness and at Tarawa. He is industrious and fair and will give any good man his due. Every morning, wearing one of several ball caps emblazoned with logos like Richmond International Raceway or Boreking, he loads up esoteric tools and leaves the house before daybreak. A few years ago, when he first started working in the trades, he drove a rusted-out Fairmont 60 miles one way to earn $7.00 an hour. When the great snowstorm of 1996 hit us and he had time off, he didn't head for the unemployment office, but rented a snowplow and cleared out parking lots and driveways all day. He is part of a social group that respects someone who, as Aaron Tippin says in his country song, pulls his weight. My son has a high regard for his more mature counterparts, and his role model is the owner of the company for which he works. Today a very successful businessman, while he was in the Army, this man almost lost one of his legs to North Vietnamese fire. Six weeks after he was shot, he was back home and down in a nasty ditch digging like one possessed even before the wound had healed and his pain had ceased.

The ditch-digger-turned-entrepreneur and the other men I've described here are part of an ever-shrinking number of smart, galvanized, hardworking, tax-paying men to whom we owe an enormous debt. We should stop discounting them and listen to what they have to say. They will tell us in plain English that God is the guarantor of our civil rights no matter how many constitutional shines are cut by the wheeler-dealers on Pennsylvania Avenue and Capitol Hill. They'll ask us to consider the dangers inherent in a busybody President's preoccupation with social minutia while nuclear-armed bits and pieces of an imploded Soviet Empire threaten our security. And applying simple logic, they will tell us that legal or illegal immigrants who come willingly to our shores or cross our Southern border, yearning to collect welfare while decrying our racism, neither belong here nor enrich our society.

Given a chance, country boys will also tell us that we are becoming a people too eager to bow down to the government; a people who are mean but not strong and who are forgetting how to live in freedom. By ignoring the voice of the rural man and by glorifying pseudo-education rather than a real knowledge of our cultural antecedents and of the democratic process, we encourage domestic and foreign transgressions. Last summer, ABC News reported that shortly before the Fourth of July, 1996, 40 New Yorkers were interviewed in Times Square. Out of those polled, only nine knew why we celebrate this day. Conduct the same survey at a church supper in Bushwood, Maryland, and I guarantee that all of the respondents will know the answer.

LIBERAL ARTS



MORE CULTURAL ENRICHMENT

"In La Crosse, Wisconsin, Judge Ramona Gonzalez, sentenced Sia Ye Vang, 32, who was found guilty of molesting his two young stepdaughters, to English lessons and community service instead of prison, explaining he wanted to give the Vietnamese immigrant 'the opportunity to continue his education and his assimilation into our culture.'"

—*from the* Bloomington Voice, *November 7, 1996*

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While not necessarily the case in New York—or in New Jersey—in the sticks, it seems, America remains "in tack."

Joyce Bennett writes from Leonardtown, Maryland.

American Names

by Larry Tritten

I have fallen in love with American names,
The sharp names that never get fat,
The snakeskin titles of mining claims,
The plumed war-bonnet of Medicine Hat,
Tucson and Deadwood and Lost Mule Flat.

—Stephen Vincent Benét, *American Names*

My family used to live in a mountain valley near a mining community in the wilds of Northern Idaho, and our mailing address was Star Route, Smelterville, Idaho. Before that we lived in a town called Coeur d'Alene, which indisputably is a sharp name, although Smelterville is anything but sharp and isn't exactly a snakeskin title, either. In any case, I became acquainted early in life with the extreme possibility in the linguistic architecture of American names, which can range from ugly folk metaphor to foreign exoticism.

You cannot, I submit, have an address such as Smelterville, Idaho, without having your stylistic sensibilities affected, and I remember how oddly self-conscious I used to feel as a boy when I ordered things through the mail from mythic metropolises such as Chicago and New York City and was forced to locate myself in so unglamorous-sounding a place as Smelterville, which is probably only one stylistic millimeter less gauche than the Mudville of Ernest Lawrence Thayer's *Casey at the Bat*—and Mudville was a parody name! I did not know then that "Idaho" is an Indian word that means roughly "light on the mountains" and consequently is as pretty a name as Smelterville is viscid and gloomy. The name Smelterville would seep from my pen with the same sluggish morbidity with which the wastes from the mines in the area infiltrated and obfuscated some of the local streams and rivers.

In the meantime, I thought typical Americans (i.e., the typical American families in all of the radio and television shows and movies and comic books) lived in towns with straightforward, idyllic names that could be gotten by mixing up any of a couple of dozen nouns and adjectives—for example, oak, palm, sun, wood, lake, view, green, dale, glen, hill, falls, grove, spring, and so forth. Archie Andrews lived in Riverdale, Henry Aldrich lived in Centerville, Pepper Young's family lived in Elmwood, etc. Typical Americans, it seemed, never lived in places such as Key West or Council Bluffs.

These formulaic stereotypes aside, there is, as Benét asserts, something special about American names, and I think the reason for that is that they are made up of words from so many different languages. Thus we have names that cover an exotic spectrum—Angola on the Lake, Ball Ground, Cinnaminson, Dreamland Villa, Encino, Frostproof, Germantown, Ho-Ho-Kus, Isla Vista, Kaawa, Lost Nation, Moscow, Neon, Oblong, Pend Oreille, Quapaw, Rome, Santa Claus, Tahitian Gardens, Urania, Vermilion, West Babylon, Xenia, Young America, Zilwaukee. American names fill the mouth with fascinating combinations of vowels and consonants and are full of soft utterance and hard articulation, bird song and verbal grapeshot.

The language is a mongrel, and while it may lack the precise grace and purity of a thoroughbred language, it is full of odd tricks and delightful quirks that give it a unique class of its own. Nowhere is this more obvious than in our place-names. And they can be complicated. Sioux (which French traders and trappers learned from the Dakotas and Lakotas and means "adders," literally "little snakes," i.e., the enemy—the name given them by their enemies the Ojibwas), for example, is a dulcet sound that must be altogether different for those who know what it really means. Consider the effect this has on a pleasant song like "Sioux City Sue." And Coeur d'Alene, which sounds so lyrically romantic, means literally heart of the awl (a tool), an ungainly metaphor considering how many different things this French heart might have been transplanted into—heart of the mountains, heart of the woods, and so on. Still, the sound is mellifluous—so if you can stash the translation in the back of your mind the name still shines.

Names are, to begin with, utilitarian; they are the labels that enable us to distinguish one person from another and one place from another. But beyond that they are entities of aesthetic and stylistic substance. Consider the many and varied moods and impressions evoked by them: Red, Vanessa, Crazy Horse, Algernon, Blackie, Jove, Silver City, Riverdale, Canal Street, Loon Lake, Wounded Knee, Salt Lake City.

Pick a state, any state, take a close look at the map of it and feast your eye and mind on the wealth of colorful, eccentric, and fascinating names your forefathers doled out to its streams, valleys, meadows, hills, towns, mountains, rivers, roads, and the like. Then multiply these thousands of names by 50 and consider that this heroic task of naming, hundreds of thousands of names, was for the most part performed in a few decades as men and women swarmed westward across the plains and over the mountains, filling the rivers of Colorado with bottles from New York and the wilderness of Wyoming with product wrappers from the stores of Ohio. Hundreds of thousands of names, summarily served up, ladled out, tacked on—just as, no doubt, will one day happen on Mars.

America is little more than 200 years old, and already much of the history of its names has been lost in the headwaters of the Rio Tempora, untraceable in the darkling reaches of the past. California, the name of our most high-profile state, has an uncertain etymology. One theory has it that the name can be traced back to the French epic *Chanson de Roland*, but the record is incomplete, a matter of speculation. No one knows who named California. And I've always wondered how Montana got a Spanish name so early when it took the taco and enchilada until just a few decades ago to migrate there commercially from California. Apparently language can predate cuisine by a century or so. In Idaho, in 1955, when Dean Martin's hit song "That's *Amore*" ("When the moon hits your eye like a big pizza pie, that's *amore*!") reached our juke boxes, we thought the phrase was "piece of pie." There were no pizza parlors in the panhandle of Idaho yet.

Some archaeologists in the far distant

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future, digging up the ruins of our towns and cities, may reconstruct a record by which they believe these same had names such as Nixon and Burger King, Radio City, Tinseltown, Coca Cola, Freeway, and Playboy. And perhaps the names will sound as exotic and colorful to them as the Indian names do to us.

Larry Tritten writes from San Francisco.

FAMILY

Estrogen Poisoning

by Marian Kester Coombs

A first-grade teacher in the suburbs of Washington, D.C., concludes that while some of her pupils suffer various degrees of parental neglect, others seem to be experiencing the opposite extreme: such pampering at home that they cannot even tie their own shoes, and must have it done for them. It takes a while before she realizes that the latter children cannot tie their shoes because no one has ever taken the trouble to teach them.

A developmental psychologist at the University of Rochester is disturbed by the high rate—13 percent and rising—of "attention-deficient," "hyperactive" six- to 12-year-old boys being dosed with Ritalin in that urban area. After reporting on her informal observation of several mother-son pairs ("Son cuddled next to Mom. Son ran the strings from the hood of Mom's jacket through his lips. Son rocked his body back and forth. Son patted Mom's face. Through all of this, Mom ignored him"), the psychologist writes, "What's behind the alarmingly high incidence of ADHD, I believe, is the widespread failure of parents and teachers to help children learn to regulate themselves, including managing their attention. Many parents do not seem inclined to socialize their children" (*Rochester Review*, Fall 1996).

A young working mother is having a dreadful time finding someone, *anyone* to whose mercenary mercies she can safely entrust her precious two-year-old, and so she writes an angry little get-it-off-my-chest piece for *Woman's Day*. "Day care in America is such a hodge-podge, antiquated affair that parents are forced to take a leap of faith with the well-being of their child that they wouldn't take with any other part of their lives," she whines. "We are so vulnerable. . . . Where is the affordable, decent day care that will let parents go off to work secure in the knowledge that their child is being well cared for? . . . Does it really have to be this gut-wrenching?" By now we do not have to be told what such whining precedes: still another demand for still another fix of big government.

When *The Awakening* was published in 1899, public reaction to author Kate Chopin's hostility toward those lowly creatures she termed "mother-women" was disbelief that any woman could feel that way about motherhood, and scandalization at the sheer "perversity of her unnatural sentiments." A mere three generations later, Ms. Chopin's sentiments have been almost universally adopted by our society—most fervently, in fact, by mothers themselves.

Fatherlessness has been tagged as the biggest problem facing the family in this country today, and by extension the biggest problem facing our society as a whole. But it is really *motherlessness* that besets us. Nobody wants to be the mom. Motherhood is viewed as a sucker's game. Yet what a wondrous system it was, admirable in its lavish economy, its unimpeachable irrationality, its gloriously selfish selflessness, its universal particularity. Every child was to have at least one person on earth who was absolutely crazy about him, a sucker for him. Every child was to be the diminutive king or queen of at least one person's susceptible heart. The usual law of life—*Eat or be eaten!*—did not apply to motherhood, which gloried, up till now, in giving—*Eat, eat!* But big-government feminism has decreed that motherhood must go; taxes are levied against it; studies are concocted to prove it baneful; and so it is going.

"Feminism" is a misleading term for the culprit, however. What these infuriated women want to do is get rid of femininity altogether, to seize and wield what they clearly consider to be superior, masculine attributes. The movement should rightly be called *masculism*; it is the triumph of all values traditionally associated with the male: dominance, aggression, egotism, single-mindedness, profanity, promiscuity, toughness, brutal objectivity, aloof self-sufficiency. Even the bodies of men—the sculpted musculature of flat abs and steel glutes—are displayed as templates for the new woman to reproduce herself upon. Not for her the female body as temple wherein the race is reproduced. Everything women have historically been associated with, among every people, in every land and age, is being devalued and derided in the name of "feminism."

With these acquired masculine characteristics, then, young women are to force themselves into the mold of citizen-soldier, power attorney, "extreme" all-out athlete. Arrayed in teams, sorted into rigid hierarchies, exhorted to "Go for it!" no matter who or what stands in their way, women are to become male impersonators. Not mere impersonators, of course: one of the central beliefs of masculism is that women are and have always been just as good (that is, as *masculine*) as men, and indeed will prove better at the game once they have taken it over. This belief was recently stroked by a Foundation for the Future study "proving" that females in the labor force are superior to males in 28 out of 31 ways.

But "masculism" is also a misleading term. It is not really the masculinization but the *homosexualization* of society that is occurring. True masculinity is unswervingly attracted to the feminine; as Isak Dinesen, a female Nietzsche, wrote in her epigrammatic fashion, "The love of woman and womanliness is a masculine characteristic, and the love of man and manliness is a feminine characteristic . . . [I]t is almost impossible for a woman to irritate a real man, and as to the women, a man is never quite contemptible, never altogether rejectable, as long as he remains a man." In contrast, it is the homosexual mind that finds both the truly feminine and the truly masculine—that is, the heterosexual—unspeakably distasteful. It is the true natures of both men and women that have been targeted for denunciation and destruction. Why? Because the traditional familial order of society is an immovable object in the path of the irresistible force of the state and its plans for our improvement.

Thus at the same time masculine attributes are aped, their originators—men, and white men in particular—are savagely mocked and attacked for pos-

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sessing or exercising them. The Virginia Military Institute's "rat line," a typically male institution for the breaking of young colts by stallions, is horrific if manned by males, but somehow terrific if populated by sweating, shorn, and swearing females. Men's-club or locker-room camaraderie is reprehensible, but the same behavior transposed to a female key is right on. Boys and men are ridiculed (and medicated) for having "testosterone poisoning," while women bulk up on steroids to win Olympic medals.

Now there are those who suspect that this massive female invasion of male turf is only a scheme hatched by levelers and pacifists to neuter men's warlike nature and thereby destroy "militarism" from within. And such may well be the case; certainly this is the aim of Patsy Schroeder and the next Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Ruth Bader Ginsburg. Any wicked fairy tale can come true in the Age of Clinton.

Nevertheless, the female masses are not wise to the plot. They have bought and swallowed the regendering program whole. In high schools and colleges throughout the country, it is *verboten* for girls to admit they would like to be wives and mothers when they grow up. The only way to escape the program—and a way increasing numbers of desperate girls are taking—is to get pregnant and opt out of "higher education" altogether. For the rest, their lives as women will be, and in many cases already have been, sacrificed to the dizzyingly swift ongoing inversion of all values. Thus we get the grisly spectacle of women lobbying passionately for partial-birth abortions while understandably crazed men shoot up abortuaries. The former protected status of women as the more vulnerable sex will probably never recover. Women face the worst of both worlds: vulnerability and "equality."

Daughters brought up motherless do not learn to be mothers. Motherless sons do not learn to respect or love women. Such denatured generations are swiftly arising to overtake us. The underclass, from which "welfare" has banished fathering, experiences little but mortally wounded mothering, while the former middle class, now thoroughly proletarianized, manages its own demoralization along convergent lines, slavishly conforming to the state's desire to turn all human activity into taxable wage labor. Particularly hard hit are young men, always more difficult to socialize in any case. Ironically, most high-achieving men have had mothers with strong, dominant personalities—precisely the sort of women least likely to have or stay home with children in the modern era. Hardest hit of all are young white men, whose precipitous drop from top of the heap to lowest of the low is surely the most spectacular sociopolitical descent in the annals of man.

What sort of world will motherless children make, these feckless youths and charmless maidens? An awful sullenness; a routine violence; an aggressive, gnawing sense of entitlement superimposed upon an even deeper conviction of worthlessness (euphemistically called "lack of self-esteem"); a cynical disbelief in any ideal, in anything noble or transcendent in the human project; a reductionist, materialist stupefaction unresponsive to beauty or truth; and in the midst of all this, a most superstitious credulity. The sudden wholesale return of pagan pantheism with its dreamcatchers and fetishes and angel apparitions—hallucinations born of religious deprivation—gives new life to G.K. Chesterton's words: "When man no longer believes in God, he does not then believe in nothing, but in anything."

The unsettling thing about modern youth is their lack, not of manners, but of *souls*. Among the many practices that should distinguish human society from animal life, the most important is the quality and intensity of mothering, supported manfully by fathering. No other species invests more time and energy, more nurturing, more *love* in its offspring than humans do. And this pays off: the offspring are humanized. They develop that special, species-specific luxury, a soul. It is solely for the sake of that soul that human beings cherish one another. When it disappears, the self-conception that makes possible the human social world dies with it.

And so does God Himself. As Ludwig Feuerbach observed, our idea of God flows from the physical reality of the family, *die Heilige Familie*: father-judge, mother-nurturer, child-beloved. What will God become once bereft of the family? What He is already fast becoming: the criminally negligent but judgment-proof nanny state, jealously clutching its hoard of dead souls.

Marian Kester Coombs writes from Crofton, Maryland.

EDUCATION

Rose Hill College

by Clyde Wilson

Historians of the future who look back at us, assuming the survival of critical intelligence in the future, will characterize our times as the Age of Bureaucracy. A time in which nearly every human endeavor—religion, education, economy, national defense—was swallowed up in huge institutions which existed for their own sakes rather than for the purposes they purported to accomplish.

To espy healthy, purposeful institutions one must look in small out-of-the-way places like Rose Hill College, now in its first year of operation. In my capacity as a politically incorrect professor, I have often been asked by concerned parents for guidance as to the colleges to which they might entrust their children—places of sound education and decent moral atmosphere. I have been hard-pressed to answer, usually being limited to pointing out that some places are worse than others.

The appearance of Rose Hill fills a genuine need. It joins the handful of institutions that one can recommend to such parents and promises to become the St. Thomas Aquinas College of the South. Located on a five-acre estate in the historic district of the charming small city of Aiken, South Carolina, Rose Hill is paying sincere attention to both rigorous traditional education and wholesome spiritual atmosphere.

The launching of a college in these days is, to say the least, a bold and risky act. Rose Hill is largely the creation of one man, Owen Jones, a native of Florida and former Episcopal priest, now devoutly Orthodox. Jones has sunk his own intellectual, spiritual, and moral capital into the school to make a reality of his vision, a rare thing in these days when institutional visions are more often perverted than made flesh and when overweening government has absorbed so much private wealth that new institutions are beyond even thought for most

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of us. (Even so prudently administered an institution as Rose Hill operates at a cost of $3,000 per day.)

The stated mission of the college is to provide an alternative to "the secular agendas, government intrusion, and multicultural superficiality [that] are now the rule. . . . Classes are always small, taking the form of tutorials and seminars rather than lectures, and . . . emphasis is placed upon active inquiry into principles, not the passive collection of facts. . . . Rather than studying textbooks and other secondary materials, students read a common curriculum of primary works, from ancient times to the present."

Anyone familiar with the actual state of American higher education today cannot help but applaud this effort to return to a classical concept of learning. Broadly speaking, higher education everywhere has been reduced to a smorgasbord of noncommunicating specialties and unrelated courses that consist largely of description of empirical phenomena. (The subject matter is not really empirical, however, because it is shot through with unexamined leftist assumptions.) And higher education everywhere is under the effective control of a peculiar caste of opportunistic and interchangeable politician/bureaucrats whose worldview consists entirely of trendy secular jargon.

It is these conditions, and not political correctness, multiculturalism, or deconstruction, that are the real problems of higher education today. They provide the background on which such abominations can flourish. It should surprise no one that students emerge from four years of the kind of college education now offered with no capacity to understand and apply larger principles and perspectives, no information but a lot of tendentious prejudices and corrosive cynicism. That students occasionally emerge better than this is a tribute to the students and to the intrinsic value of learning itself, even under the worst conditions.

The first class at Rose Hill has 17 students, with five faculty. Despite rigorous academic demands and behavioral rules (or perhaps because of them), student morale seems high. The entire class proceeds together in the study of languages, science, mathematics, philosophy, and theology. Jones envisions in five years an enrollment of 100 in four classes, with ten faculty.

Of the first class, many are Orthodox communicants, though there are also several Protestants and Catholics. Some of the students emerged from homeschooling. Two already have bachelor's degrees from prestigious institutions but are beginning over at a place where they believe they will fulfill their desire for true intellectual development. (The curriculum is more demanding than most graduate schools.) Some of the women students perhaps reasonably hope that Rose Hill College will be a place to find Christian husbands.

The college accepts no federal aid of any kind and depends entirely on gifts and Jones's own resources. "The young people we have attracted to our program so far," says the founder, "represent a growing faction of the youth of our society who are spiritually sensitive by nature and who are questioning the very premises of our secular order. They realize that [here] they are led to a process of decision-making that requires them to step out of the mainstream before they are hurled over the falls" by present-day American society.

Rose Hill seeks to implement its belief in the interconnection of knowledge and virtue and the very Orthodox idea of the inseparability of doctrine and practice. It wants to create a "small, intimate learning community" where social and religious life are integrated with education. Students are forbidden drugs, alcohol, and inappropriate interaction of the sexes. As a part of the building of community and the joining of learning and practice, students are given hands-on experience in the cultivation of the college's magnificent gardens.

Anyone familiar with the lack of intellectual and moral community and of educational coherence, so widespread today, cannot but be impressed with the thought and planning and well-directed energy that have gone into this hope-inspiring institution—a remarkable example of how works seeming to be nearly impossible can be accomplished by faith and vision.

Clyde Wilson is a professor of history at the University of South Carolina.

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LAW

Federalizing Tort Reform

by David J. Owsiany

On May 20, 1996, the United States Supreme Court engaged in its own version of tort reform by striking down the punitive damages award of two million dollars in the *BMW of North America* v. *Gore* case. Unfortunately, this case represents an example of two of the worst trends in public policy: expansion of the federal government's intrusion on the states and judicial usurpation of legislative authority. While the *BMW* case was proceeding to the Supreme Court, the Ohio legislature was considering a broad tort reform proposal that would dramatically alter the state's personal injury lawsuit system. On October 28, after more than 20 months of legislative tinkering, Governor George Voinovich signed the tort reform bill into law.

There is plenty of evidence that our society has become too litigious and that lawsuit abuse is extremely costly to consumers, businesses, and professionals. According to a recent study, the estimated direct cost to Americans of our civil litigation system is $132 billion per year. Over the past two decades, the average jury award has more than tripled. American companies pay liability insurance premiums that are 20 percent to 50 percent higher than those paid by foreign companies. And, of course, incidents like the one concerning the spilled McDonald's coffee are reported regularly in the press.

Personal injury lawsuits have historically been regulated at the state level. The result of the *BMW* case, however, was that punitive damages in personal injury lawsuits became an issue to be dealt with at the *federal* level. To make matters worse, it was not the elected representatives who addressed the issue but *unelected federal judges*.

The plaintiff in the *BMW* case purchased what he believed to be a new BMW automobile. Apparently, the car was repainted when the original paint job was damaged during transportation or manufacture. BMW had a policy of selling a car as new if the cost of any such

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repair did not exceed three percent of the car's suggested retail price. When the plaintiff discovered his car had been repainted, he sued BMW. The jury returned a verdict finding BMW liable for economic (out of pocket) damages of $4,000. Additionally, the jury held BMW liable for *four million dollars* in punitive damages because it found BMW's policy of selling a repainted car as new to be "gross, oppressive or malicious" fraud. The Alabama Supreme Court reduced the punitive damage award, holding that "a constitutionally reasonable punitive damages award" in the case was two million dollars.

The majority opinion for the U.S. Supreme Court, written by Justice John Paul Stevens, conceded that "punitive damages may properly be imposed to further a state's legitimate interests in punishing unlawful conduct and deterring its repetition." According to Stevens, "States necessarily have considerable flexibility in determining the level of punitive damages that they will allow" in any particular case. However, Stevens noted that when an award is "grossly excessive" in relation to the state's interests it enters the "zone of arbitrariness that violates the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment." Stevens concluded that while the court is "not prepared to draw a bright line marking the limits of a constitutionally acceptable punitive damages award," it was fully convinced that the "grossly excessive award" in the *BMW* case "transcends the constitutional limit."

Justice Antonin Scalia, in a dissent joined by Justice Clarence Thomas, pointed out that at the "time of adoption of the Fourteenth Amendment," it was well understood that punitive damages represented "the assessment by the jury, as the voice of the community, of the measure of punishment the defendant deserved." Scalia said that the majority's decision is "really no more than a disagreement with the community's sense of indignation or outrage expressed in the punitive damage award" of the jury as reduced by the Alabama Supreme Court. He also noted that nothing in the due process clause gives the U.S. Supreme Court "priority over the judgment of state courts and juries" with regard to punitive damages, and concluded that the "Constitution provides no warrant for federalizing yet another aspect of our Nation's legal culture (no matter how much in need of correction it may be), and the application of the Court's new rule of constitutional law is constrained by no principle other than the Justices' subjective assessment of the 'reasonableness' of the award in relation to the conduct for which it was assessed."

Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, in a separate dissenting opinion joined in by Chief Justice William Rehnquist, wrote that the majority "unnecessarily and unwisely ventures into territory traditionally within the States' domain, and does so in the face of reform measures recently adopted or currently under consideration in legislative arenas." Ginsburg included an appendix to her opinion listing 14 states that have capped punitive damage awards. Additionally, at least three other state legislatures were considering caps on punitive damages at the time of the *BMW* decision. Ohio's was one of those reform proposals then under consideration.

The Ohio legislature's broad tort reform proposal includes a wide array of changes in the personal injury lawsuit system, including provisions aimed at limiting the number of frivolous lawsuits and placing caps on noneconomic (commonly known as "pain and suffering") as well as punitive damages. Since its introduction in early 1995 by Ohio Representative Pat Tiberi, a Republican from Columbus, the bill has been widely debated in the legislature and the media.

While the legislative process is never pretty, it does permit various interested parties to present their viewpoints. The Ohio legislature heard from trial attorneys and former personal injury suit plaintiffs advocating status quo in the tort system. They claimed there was no lawsuit crisis and that juries should determine the amount of compensation that injured plaintiffs receive. On the other side, the legislature heard from small business owners, farmers, professionals, like accountants, physicians, and dentists, and many others who testified how the threat of lawsuit abuse and huge jury awards affect their businesses. The legislature also heard from representatives of the Ohio Bar Association and state judges giving their input on how the proposed changes would affect the courts and the parties to personal injury lawsuits. Some polls showed that as many as 80 percent of Ohioans thought that the personal injury lawsuit system needed reform.

The bill as introduced capped punitive damages to an amount not to exceed the amount to economic damages. Economic damages, commonly known as "out of pocket" damages, like lost wages and medical bills, were not in any way limited in the proposed legislation. Punitive damages are meant to punish the defendant and, generally, are awarded only when the defendant's conduct is found to be willful or wanton. By capping punitive damages to the amount of economic damages, the Ohio legislature was attempting to tie the extent of the punishment to the actual harm done.

When the bill emerged from the conference committee (which had the task of ironing out the differences between the House and Senate versions), it limited punitive damages to the lesser of three times the amount of compensatory damages, or $100,000, when the defendant is an individual or employer with 25 or fewer employees. For larger employers the cap is three times compensatory damages, or $250,000, whichever is greater. When Voinovich signed the bill into law, the elected officials of Ohio, who are accountable to the citizenry, had finally passed significant tort reform.

The importance of maintaining state sovereignty over such matters was recognized by our Founders. As James Madison wrote in *Federalist 51*, "In the compound republic of America, the power surrendered by the people, is first divided between two distinct governments, and then the portion allotted to each, subdivided among distinct and separate departments. Hence a double security arises to the rights of the people." Both of those features—respect for the division of power between state and federal governments and the separation of powers—were disregarded in the *BMW* case. The intended function of federal courts is to apply the law as it comes to them from the legislature. The U.S. Supreme Court disagreed with the state of punitive damage law in Alabama, so it followed its own agenda for punitive damages. In doing so, the Supreme Court disregarded the separation of powers by taking the issue from the legislative branch and establishing itself, an elite group of unelected judges, as king in the realm of punitive damages. Furthermore, the Court disregarded the notion of limited federal government by deciding the issue at the federal level despite the fact that state legislatures, like Ohio's, were establishing their own rules with regard to personal injury lawsuits, generally, and punitive damages, specifi-

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cally. By taking issues away from the state legislatures—be it abortion, gay rights, or, now, tort reform—the Court endangers our liberties, and calls into question the fundamental concept of federalism and the very foundation of our government structure, representative democracy.

David J. Owsiany is an attorney in Columbus, Ohio, and a member of the board of trustees of the Ohio Alliance for Civil Justice. The views expressed are his own.

Solomons and Caesars

by Gregory J. Sullivan

Karen Finley is a "performance artist." Her performances are succinctly described by Judge Robert Bork in his new book *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*: "Before an audience, [Finley] would strip to the waist, smear her body with chocolate (to represent excrement) and sprouts (sperm), and wail about what men have done to women." According to a recent decision by the California-based Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals—the former court of the apostate Justice Kennedy—Finley's First Amendment right to free speech was violated when the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) turned her down for a grant. Clearly, First Amendment jurisprudence has departed from the realm of reason.

In response to the NEA's support of Robert Mapplethorpe's pornographic photographs and Andres Serrano's blasphemous "Piss Christ," Congress amended a statute to require that the NEA "take into consideration general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public" when making grants. The Ninth Circuit's opinion, which along with the district court's opinion decorously eschewed a description of Finley's performance (would such a description have been indecent?), said that this standard was, under the First Amendment, an impermissible content-based restriction. The fact that Finley's right to free speech was not in the least abridged—the NEA simply refused to force the taxpayers to subsidize it—failed to make any difference to this majority of what Judge Bork has called "First Amendment voluptuaries."

In his dissent, Judge Andrew Kleinfeld has no difficulty demolishing the majority's embarrassing incoherence. "We now live in a legal context prohibiting display of a cross or menorah on government property," he noted. "But if a cross is immersed in urine, a government grant cannot be withheld on the ground that the art would offend general standards of decency and respect for the religious beliefs of most Americans." He wryly added: "This self-contradictory silliness is not built into the Bill of Rights. The First Amendment does not prohibit the free exercise of common sense." Judge Kleinfeld explained to the majority a proposition with which any first-year law student is familiar: "First Amendment law protects individual liberty from government, not the government from the people."

Of course, *Finley* is not a constitutional aberration, especially by Ninth Circuit standards. In *Compassion in Dying* v. *Washington*, for example, the Ninth Circuit, with a brazen lawlessness and abuse of the historical evidence that might surprise even Justice Brennan, invented a hitherto unknown right to physician-assisted suicide. This right was promulgated over another fine dissent by Judge Kleinfeld in which he pointed out a fundamental error in the approach in both *Compassion in Dying* and *Finley*. Judge Kleinfeld, who was appointed to the Ninth Circuit in 1991 by President Bush (Bush's other appointment: Clarence Thomas), observed that the "Founding Fathers did not establish the United States as a democratic republic so that elected officials would decide trivia, while all great questions would be decided by the judiciary. . . . That an issue is important does not mean that the people, through their democratically elected representatives, do not have the power to decide it. One might suppose that the general rule in a democratic republic would be the opposite, with a few exceptions." This is a sound understanding of our constitutional system, and in its witting renunciation of this understanding the Ninth Circuit subverts the document that it purports to construe. This point is particularly true with respect to the author of the lunatic majority opinion in *Compassion in Dying*, Judge Stephen Reinhardt, who specializes in results-driven, make-it-up-as-you-go-along jurisprudence.

What can be done about such abuses? The appointment of more jurists like Judge Kleinfeld is critical, but that is impossible with President Clinton in the White House. The main thing at this point is to make sure that these decisions are recognized for the arrogation of power by the judiciary that they plainly are. In the short term, the most obvious way to eliminate the problem presented by the *Finley* case is to enact what many conservatives have advocated: the abolition of the NEA and the removal of the government from the art-subsidy business altogether. And in order to salvage what little is left of intelligible constitutional law, perhaps we should also abolish the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals.

Gregory J. Sullivan is an attorney in private practice in New Jersey.

GOVERNMENT

Secession and the New American Constitution

by Joseph Stumph

The nine states that ratified the Constitution on June 21, 1788, created an entirely new government. This government was not patterned after the one established under the Articles of Confederation, which was created by the 13 states just seven years before. The Articles actually transferred very little power to the agent they called the "central," or "general," government and readily recognized that the attempt by 13 sovereign nations to act in unison was an untried experiment. For example, it was well understood that if these states were to defeat Great Britain in the Revolutionary War, it would take a unified effort of all 13 acting as one, as well as "a firm Reliance on the Protection of divine Providence."

The Revolutionary War officially ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris on September 3, 1783. The states' newly won independence was acknowledged when Great Britain, in the first

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paragraph of the Treaty, conceded that the former colonies were now not only what they claimed to be in the Declaration of Independence, "Free and Independent States," but were now "Free, *Sovereign* and Independent States."

When the war ended, relations between the states soon deteriorated. They exercised their sovereignty as individual nations by, for example, raising tariff barriers against each other's imported goods. By 1786 relations between the states were so chaotic that it became obvious to many that if peace or stability were to be maintained, something must be done.

In fact, as early as 1782, Alexander Hamilton had asked his own state, New York, to adopt a resolution calling for a constitutional convention, but the other states would not support it. After Hamilton was elected to Congress in 1783, he campaigned for such a convention, but Congress would not listen. As W. Cleon Skousen relates in *The Making of America*, "When Washington discovered that some of his officers were planning to abandon the Articles of Confederation and set up a monarchy with Washington as ruler, he vehemently denounced the plot and sent a letter to every state in the Union pleading with them to call a convention as soon as possible. Nothing happened."

On March 28, 1785, Washington invited his own state, Virginia, and Maryland, to send delegates to meet with him at his home at Mount Vernon. A compact was written and ratified by both states. A trade conference took place at Annapolis in September 1786, but delegates came from only five states. Nothing happened, but it was agreed that they should campaign for a constitutional convention.

On February 21, 1787, Congress sent an invitation to each of the states to send delegates to Philadelphia on May 14. Congress said the convention was "for the sole and express purpose of revising the Articles of Confederation." Because of latecomers, the convention finally opened on May 25, 1787. Rhode Island refused to send delegates.

On September 17, the convention finished its work, and 39 of the remaining 42 delegates signed their approval of what would become an experiment with *a new government* by a confederation of nations, should the required number of states called for in the proposal, nine, actually ratify it. With the approval of the ninth state, New Hampshire, the old Union under the Articles of Confederation was dissolved and the nine states seceded from the remaining four. What has been known ever since as the Constitution of the United States not only formed our present government, but was the most subtle *secession* in the history of the world. So subtle, in fact, that few Americans, even yet, realize or comprehend the silent revolution which took place on June 21, 1787. Nor have contemporary states' rights advocates discovered the power and authority by which Founders made the Constitution effective. The last paragraph of Article VII says: "The ratification of the conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the establishment of this constitution between the States so ratifying the same."

Because the Founders' experiment with a new government had lasted such a short time under the Articles of Confederation, in spite of the fact that those Articles had declared in four places that the 13 states were a "union in perpetuity," no mention of perpetual union was made in the Constitution. The Founders realized the foolishness of their first mistake and refused to repeat it. And even if they had declared the present Constitution as binding us in a perpetual union, they knew that one generation cannot bind the next to its laws and constitution.

Virginia, which came into the new union only four days after New Hampshire, was not about to take any chances on anybody claiming "perpetuity" of this newest and latest experiment in government. She reserved the right to secede in her written ratification of the Constitution. So did the 11th state, New York, and the 13th, Rhode Island, as they followed Virginia's lead. Rhode Island did not bother to join the new experiment in government for almost two years, well over a year after George Washington became President, and then only by a 32-30 vote of her delegates. Rhode Island, in other words, remained outside the new Union under the Constitution and operated as an *independent nation*.

The above sketch of history is crucial to understanding the right of states to form a second confederacy in violation of the requirement of the first compact. The Articles of Confederation could be amended only by unanimous consent, and they also required that the union of the former colonies be perpetual. Not only did the present Constitution violate these two requirements, but it delegitimized any future claim, such as President Lincoln's during the Civil War, to the perpetuity of the union.

The single rule that made the proposed Constitution effective, to bring it to life and make it binding on the ratifying states, was its last paragraph, Article VII. It simply said that if, or when, nine states adopted the proposal, those nine would have formed a new government, regardless whether the remaining four states in their current union ever joined.

It is this article that can give states' rightists the best chance of reestablishing the Constitution as the Supreme Law of the Land and eliminating the innumerable bad treaties and entangling alliances and agreements with other nations. In

LIBERAL ARTS

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The *Albuquerque Journal* reported on January 18 that a municipal anti-graffiti crew mistook a mural for graffiti, failed to notice an inscription identifying it as part of a public arts program, and painted over it. "We didn't intentionally go out there to wipe out a piece of art," said Mike Trujillo, who oversees the city's Graffiti Removal Services. The cost of the mural was estimated at $15,400.

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one fell swoop we could eliminate the unlawful and fraudulent 14th and 16th amendments and fix the flaw in the Constitution that gives Supreme Court Justices lifetime appointments.

Since the Civil War, or more correctly, the War Between the States, the federal government has become more and more abusive and tyrannical. All three branches of the federal government increasingly ignore the requirements of the Constitution. As our agents, elected officials and bureaucrats rule and regulate, hound and persecute, many of the people who elect them and pay their salaries. Federal agents are often soft on real criminals, even as they prosecute and jail law-abiding men. Such was the case in the prosecution and jailing of Randy Weaver, after federal agents murdered his wife and son. For this outrage, the federal government settled with him and his surviving children out of court for $3.1 million. And such was the case at Waco, where, after burning to death men, women, and children, our federal servants prosecuted and jailed the Branch Davidian survivors.

Our forefathers thought their taxes were unjustifiably high in 1776. They felt the heel of the tyrant upon them. In their worst nightmares, they never dreamed of surrendering to a central government the kind of power Washington currently wields. They would be shocked how we of "the noble birthright" now tolerate taxes many times higher than those under which they felt burdened. They would, without doubt, say to us as the great patriot Patrick Henry said to them: "I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!"

While many Americans have worked to keep freedom alive and to preserve the Constitution, most realize that nobody has come up with a plan which might have a chance of defeating the juggernaut of the rich and powerful men who control our country's sovereignty. If there is a plan which, at this late and dark hour, has any possibility of saving the Constitution and our freedom, it is the same idea which our Fathers held in establishing the Constitution on June 21, 1788. That idea is to duplicate their simple and powerful proposal. Not with a constitutional convention, and not with a majority of the states. Just a single state willing to make the proposal to the rest of the states will do.

By duplicating and proposing Article VII, we will wake up the American people and their elected representatives to the fact that the states are, and always have been, in charge, if they simply choose to resist federal usurpations instead of playing the role of the pacifist and allowing their agent to assume undelegated powers.

Article VII reads: "The Ratification of the Conventions of nine States, shall be sufficient for the Establishment of this Constitution between the States so ratifying the same." After making minor modifications to our Constitution of 1788, and eliminating the unlawful 14th and 16th amendments, I would suggest an amended Article VII to read: "The ratification of the conventions of 35 States, shall be sufficient for the establishment of the constitution between the States so ratifying the same."

Twelve of the 13 states proposed the present Constitution. However, any number of states, even a single state, could have made the proposal. Because the Constitution was a mere proposal, not a declaration, even a private group, or even a single individual, such as George Washington, could have proposed it. However, the greater the perceived prestige or influence of those making the proposal, the greater the possibility of the proposal being seriously considered, at least in the beginning.

So today, if even a single state will propose an Article VII constitution, send it out to the legislatures of the other 49 states, and if the number of states as proposed in that state's Article VII ratify the proposal, we will have formed ourselves a new government, essentially the same as we have now, and we will have rid ourselves of the entire federal establishment including Congress, the President, and all federal judges. Even if unable to convince a sufficient number of states to go along with the formation of a new government, a national debate among millions of Americans will follow, by a single state merely making the proposal. Even if there is not a second state which will go along with it, which is highly unlikely, the furious attack on the proposal by the rich and powerful in government and the media will be astounding. It will be a win-win situation.

For a modern constitution it seems wise to follow the precedent of the Founders in the percentage of states required to make ratification complete. Nine of 13 is 69.23 percent. The closest we can come to that same percentage with 50 states in the Union is 70 percent, which means our new Article VII would require ratification by 35 states. After two centuries of glorifying the work of the Founders in establishing the greatest document of freedom known to man, it will be difficult for detractors of a modern Article VII to argue with the number 35.

Some may wish to go with 38 states. Others might wish to go with a simple majority of 26. Even as few states as two could be specified in Article VII, and the retained sovereignty of each of the 50 states would lawfully allow those two states to form their own small confederation, though of course a lawful action is not necessarily a safe action. Two hundred years ago, nine of 13 assured safety. Thirty-five of 50 would assure safety today.

Joseph Stumph is president of the Committee of 50 States in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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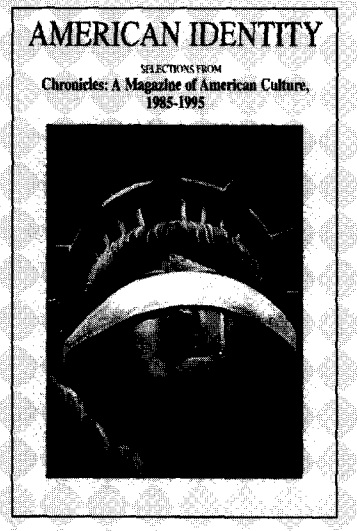

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